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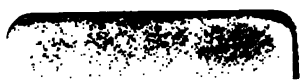

THE WORKS

OF

ALPHONSE DAUDET

LIMITED EDITION

VI.

LITTLE WHAT'S-HIS-NAME

VOL. II.

Of the LIMITED EDITION of Alphonse Daudet one thousand copies have been printed for America.

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THE WORKS OF

ALPHONSE DAUDET

LITTLE WHAT'S-HIS-NAME

TO WHICH IS ADDED

THE BELLE-NIVERNAISE

TRANSLATED BY JANE MINOT SEDGWICK

HOW JARJAILLE WENT TO HEAVEN

AND OTHER STORIES

TRANSLATED BY KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY WILLIAM P. TRENT

VOLUME II.

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURENT-DESROUSSEAUX

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CHAPTER VIII.

A READING AT THE PASSAGE DU SAUMON.

At last I finished my famous poem. I brought it to an end after four months' work, and I remember that when I came to the last verses, I could not write any more, as my hands were trembling so much with agitation, pride, pleasure, and impatience.

It was a great event in the tower of Saint-Germain. On this occasion, Jacques became for the time the Jacques of old — Jacques of the cardboard and little glue-pots. He bound for me a magnificent book in which he wished to recopy my poem with his own hand; and at every verse, there were cries of admiration and transports of enthusiasm. But I had less confidence in my work; Jacques was too fond of me, and I mistrusted him. I should have liked to have my poem read by some impartial and trustworthy person. The trouble was that I knew nobody.

Nevertheless, at the creamery, opportunities had not been wanting for me to make acquaintances.

Since we had been better off, I had eaten at the table-d'hôte in the back room. There were some twenty young men there, writers, painters, architects, or, rather, the seed from which these were to grow. To-day the seed has borne fruit; some of these young men have become famous, and when I see their names in the newspapers, it breaks my heart, for I myself am nobody. At my appearance at their table, all these young fellows received me with open arms; but as I was too shy to take part in their discussions, they soon forgot me, and I was as much alone in the midst of all of them as at my little table in the public room. I listened, but I did not talk.

Once a week, we had at dinner with us a very famous poet whose name I can no longer recollect, but whom the young men called Baghavat, after the title of one of his poems. On those days we drank Bordeaux at eighteen sous a bottle; and at dessert, the great Baghavat recited an Indian poem. Indian poems were his specialty. He had one entitled *Lakçamana*, another *Daçaratha*, another *Kalatçala*, another *Bhagiratha*, and then *Çudra*, *Cunocépa*, *Viçvamitra*, etc.; but the finest of all was *Baghavat*. Ah, when the poet recited *Baghavat*, it brought down the house in the back room! They shouted, stamped, and got up on tables. I had at my right a little architect with a red nose, who sobbed at the very first verse, and kept wiping his eyes all the time with my napkin.

I, too, carried away by the general enthusiasm, shouted louder than the others; but, at the bot-

tom, I was not crazy about *Baghavat.* In fact these Indian poems were all alike. There was always a lotus-flower, a condor, an elephant and a buffalo; sometimes, for a change, the lotus was called lotos; but, apart from these variations, all these rhapsodies were one as poor as the other; they had neither passion, truth nor imagination. Rhymes upon rhymes, and mystification. That is what I really thought of the great Baghavat: I might perhaps have judged it less severely if they had asked me for some verses in my turn; but they never asked for them, and that made me pitiless. Besides, I was not the only one of this opinion on Hindoo poetry. There was my neighbor on the left who liked it no more than I. My neighbor on the left was a singular person: oily, threadbare and shiny, with a great high forehead and a long beard on which some bits of vermicelli were always straying. He was the oldest at the table and also by far the most intelligent. Like all great spirits, he spoke little, and was not lavish of himself. Every one respected him. They said of him: "He is very clever; he is a thinker." From seeing the ironical grimace that twisted his mouth when he listened to the verses of the great Baghavat, I had conceived the highest opinion of my left-hand neighbor. I thought: "There is a man of taste; suppose I should recite my poem to him!"

One evening, as we were getting up from table, I ordered a bottle of brandy and invited the thinker to take a glass with me. He accepted,— I knew his weakness. As we drank, I led the conversation to the great Baghavat, and began by

saying a great deal against the lotus, condors, elephants and buffaloes. It was audacious of me, for elephants are very vindictive. While I was speaking, the thinker poured out the brandy for himself, in silence. From time to time he smiled, and nodded his head approvingly, with an "Ah! Ah!" Emboldened by this first success, I confessed that I, too, had composed a great poem and desired to submit it to him. "Ah! Ah!" murmured the thinker again, without blinking. Seeing my man so well disposed, I said to myself: "Now's the time!" and I drew my poem from my pocket. The thinker, quite unconcerned, poured out a fifth glass, and serenely watched me unroll my manuscript; but at the supreme moment, he laid his hand, evidently that of an old drunkard, on my sleeve. "One word, before we begin, young man," said he. "What is your standard?"

I looked at him anxiously.

"Your standard?" said the terrible thinker, raising his voice.

Alas! My standard? I had none, I had never thought of having one; and, moreover, this was easy to make out from my astonishment, flushed face and confusion.

The thinker rose indignantly. "What, you wretched young man, you have no standard! It is useless then to read me your poem; I know its worth beforehand." Thereupon, he poured out, one after another, the two or three glasses still remaining in the bottom of the bottle, took his hat, and went off, rolling his eyes furiously.

That evening, when I related my adventure to

dear Jacques, he became very angry. "Your thinker is a fool," said he. "What good is it to have a standard? Have the Bengalese one? A standard! What sort of a thing is it? Has anybody ever seen one? Standard-monger, get out!" Good Jacques, he had tears in his eyes for the insult my masterpiece and I had just received. "Listen to me, Daniel," he resumed, after a minute, "I have an idea. Since you want to read your poem, suppose you should read it at Pierrotte's house, on a Sunday?"

"At Pierrotte's? Oh, Jacques."

"Why not? Of course, Pierrotte is not a genius, but neither is he an idiot. He has very good, plain, common sense. Camille, too, would be an excellent judge, although a little partial. The very deserving person has read a great deal. The old bird Lalouette himself is not so limited as he seems to be. Besides, Pierrotte knows some very distinguished people in Paris who could be invited for that evening. What do you say? Shall I speak to him about it?"

I did not smile upon the idea of looking for judges in the Passage du Saumon; still I had so great a longing to read my verses, that after sulking for a bit, I accepted Jacques' proposal. The very next day, he spoke to Pierrotte. It is exceedingly doubtful whether the good Pierrotte exactly understood what was in question, but as he saw it was an opportunity for him to do a kindness to the children of Mademoiselle, he said "yes," without hesitation, and the invitations were immediately issued.

The little yellow drawing-room had never known such festivities before. Pierrotte, to do me honor, had invited all the best people in the china world. On the evening of the reading, there were, in addition to the usual company, M. and Mme. Passajon, with their son the veterinary, one of the most brilliant students at the School of Alfort; Ferrouillat, junior, a freemason and fine speaker, who had just had unparalleled success at the Great Orient lodge; also the Fougeroux, with their six girls in rows like organ pipes; and finally, Ferrouillat senior, a member of the music-hall, the man of the occasion. When I found myself face to face with this important tribunal, you may fancy how agitated I was. As all these good people had been told they were there to decide upon the merits of a poetical work, they thought it their duty to assume expressions suitable to the occasion, cold, lifeless and unsmiling. They whispered gravely to one another, shaking their heads like magistrates. Pierrotte, who made no such mystery of it, looked at them in surprise. When all had arrived, they were assigned places. I was seated, with my back to the piano; and the audience in a half circle about me, with the exception of old Lalouette, who nibbled his sugar in his habitual seat. After a moment's bustle, there was silence, and I began my poem in a voice of emotion.

It was a dramatic poem that bore the pompous title of the *Pastoral Comedy*. In the early days of his captivity in the school of Sarlande, Little

What 's-His-Name amused himself by telling his pupils fanciful little tales, full of crickets, butterflies and other insects. I had made the *Pastoral Comedy* with three of these short stories, arranged in the form of a dialogue, and put into verse. My poem was divided in three parts, but that evening at Pierrotte's I read them only the first part. I ask your permission to transcribe here this fragment from the *Pastoral Comedy*, not as a choice piece of literature, but only as a characteristic bit of the story of *Little What 's-His-Name.*

Imagine for one moment, my dear readers, that you are seated in a circle in the little yellow drawing-room and that Daniel Eyssette is reciting to you, trembling all over.

THE ADVENTURES OF A BLUE BUTTERFLY.

The scene is in the country. It is six o'clock in the evening, and the sun is setting. As the curtain rises, a blue Butterfly and a young Lady-bird, both of the male sex, are talking, sitting astride of a spray of fern. They have met in the morning, and have passed the day together. As it is late, the Lady-bird makes a move to go.

THE BUTTERFLY.

What! Are you going home so soon?

THE LADY-BIRD.

I should have gone before:
It 's very late, just think of it!

THE BUTTERFLY.

Oh, wait a moment more!
It never is the least too late for turning in at night:
Besides, I'm bored to death at home, and don't you think I 'm right?
It is so dull to see a door, a window, and a wall,
When, outside, one may have the sun, the falling dew and all;
And scarlet poppies blown about by soft breath of the wind.
But if the poppies should not be completely to your mind,
I should advise your saying so.

THE LADY-BIRD.

Alas! I love them, sir.

THE BUTTERFLY.

Well, then, you simpleton, I 'm sure it's not yet time to stir.
Stay on with me; the air is soft, it 's very pleasant, too.

THE LADY-BIRD.

Yes, but —

THE BUTTERFLY (*pushing him into the grass*).

There, gambol in the grass; it 's all for me and you.

THE LADY-BIRD (*resisting*).

No, don't insist; upon my word, I must go without fail.

THE BUTTERFLY.

Hush! Do you hear?

THE LADY-BIRD (*alarmed*).

What can it be?

THE BUTTERFLY.

That charming little quail
Singing so tipsily among the fresh leaves of the vine;
Upon this lovely summer night, her ditty is divine!
Sweetly the sounds are borne to us as we are listening here.

THE LADY-BIRD.

Oh, sweetly! but —

THE BUTTERFLY.

Be silent.

THE LADY-BIRD.

What?

THE BUTTERFLY.

There come some men, I fear.

[*Some men pass.*]

THE LADY-BIRD (*in a low voice, after a moment's silence*).

And men are very bad, are n't they?

THE BUTTERFLY.

Oh, very bad, alas!

THE LADY-BIRD.

I always dread lest one of them should crush me as he pass.
Their feet are huge, and my poor sides such frail and tender things.

You are not big, of course, but then, you have a pair of wings;
And that 's a comfort —

THE BUTTERFLY.

If you are afraid he 'll tread you down,
Climb up upon my back, dear boy, I 'll save you from the clown:
My sides are very strong and firm, my wings are not so thin
As those of delicate dragon-flies, of silken onion-skin.
I 'll carry you away as far as you may wish to go,
And for as long a time —

THE LADY-BIRD.

Oh, no! Dear sir, I thank you, no;
I 'd never dare to mount so high.

THE BUTTERFLY.

It 's very hard, you think,
To climb up there?

THE LADY-BIRD.

Oh, no! indeed —

THE BUTTERFLY.

Come on, why should you shrink?

THE LADY-BIRD.

You 'll take me back to my own house, you 're sure you understand?
For without that —

THE BUTTERFLY.

Try, and you 'll see I 'm quite at your command.

THE LADY-BIRD (*climbing upon his comrade's back*).

I am importunate because we 've evening prayers to say,
You know —

THE BUTTERFLY.

Oh, yes! but now look out, move back a little way.
There, that 's all right. Silence on board, or I will let
you fall.

[*They fly away, and the dialogue is continued in the air.*]

My dear, it 's simply marvellous, you are no weight at all.

THE LADY-BIRD (*in terror*).

Ah, sir! —

THE BUTTERFLY.

Well, what?

THE LADY-BIRD.

I cannot see; my head goes round and round.
I wish that you would kindly set me down upon the
ground.

THE BUTTERFLY.

Don't be a fool! If your head spin, your eyes you need
but close.

THE LADY-BIRD (*shutting his eyes*).

They 're shut.

THE BUTTERFLY.

Well, are you better now?

THE LADY-BIRD (*with an effort*).

A little, I suppose.

THE BUTTERFLY (*laughing in his sleeve*).

It 's certain there 's no talent lost among those of your name,
For navigating in the air —

THE LADY-BIRD.

Yes —

THE BUTTERFLY.

You are not to blame
If the last wrinkle in balloons has not been found so far.

THE LADY-BIRD.

Oh, no !

THE BUTTERFLY.

But now you may get down, my Lord, for here you are.

(*He alights upon a Lily.*)

THE LADY-BIRD (*opening his eyes*).

I beg your pardon, but, dear sir, it is not here I dwell.

THE BUTTERFLY.

I know: still, it 's so early yet, I think it 's just as well.
I 've brought you to a Lily, who 's a dear old friend of mine;
We 'll cool our throats; come in with me and take a glass of wine.

THE LADY-BIRD.

I really have no time to waste —

THE BUTTERFLY.

A minute, though, will do.

THE LADY-BIRD.

And in society I 'm not so well received as you.

THE BUTTERFLY.

Oh, come along! I 'll make believe you are my bastard son,
And you 'll be well enough received.

THE LADY-BIRD.

It 's far too late for fun.

THE BUTTERFLY.

It is not late; we still can hear the cricket's carol sweet.

THE LADY-BIRD (*in a whisper*).

And then I left my purse behind.

THE BUTTERFLY (*dragging him along*).

This is the Lily's treat.

(*They enter the house of the Lily.*)

The curtain falls.

When the curtain rises for the second act, it is almost dark. The two comrades are seen leaving the house of the Lily. The Lady-bird is slightly tipsy.

THE BUTTERFLY (*tendering his back*).

Let us be off.

THE LADY-BIRD.

Yes, let us go.

THE BUTTERFLY.

I wish that you would tell
Me how you liked my Lily, please.

THE LADY-BIRD.

I liked him very well.
He offered me his cellar while I was a stranger still.

THE BUTTERFLY (*looking up at the sky*).

Oh, there is Phœbe peeping out from Heaven's window-sill!
We must make haste.

THE LADY-BIRD.

Oh, why make haste? Can you be hurried, then?

THE BUTTERFLY.

It seems that you no longer care for going home again?

THE LADY-BIRD.

Oh, if I but arrive in time to say the evening prayer! —
Besides, my house is not far off; it 's only over there!

THE BUTTERFLY.

If *you* are not pressed to return, neither, I 'm sure, am I.

THE LADY-BIRD (*effusively*).

You 're such a splendid fellow, and I really don't know why
You 're not a favorite with all the creatures that exist:
And yet they say: "Bohemian and Revolutionist!
Poet and Mountebank!"

THE BUTTERFLY.

Dear, dear, who could say that of me?

THE LADY-BIRD.

Good Heavens! the Beetle said so —

THE BUTTERFLY.

What! The great big Scarabee?
He calls me mountebank because he knows he 's grown too stout.

THE LADY-BIRD.

It is not he, alone, alas! that hates you.

THE BUTTERFLY.

Oh, get out!

THE LADY-BIRD.

The kindly creeping Snails themselves are ill-inclined to you;
The Scorpions are inimical; the little Ants are, too.

THE BUTTERFLY.

What! Can this be?

THE LADY-BIRD (*confidentially*).

And I advise you strongly not to make
Efforts to win the Spider, who abhors you —

THE BUTTERFLY.

You mistake!

THE LADY-BIRD.

Even the Caterpillars think the same of you as she.

THE BUTTERFLY.

It may be so; but tell me now, in your society, —
For Caterpillars, after all, cannot be called your friends —
Am I of really bad repute?

THE LADY-BIRD.

O goodness! that depends.
The younger people all stand up for you in your defense;
The old unhappily declare you have no moral sense.

THE BUTTERFLY (*sadly*).

It 's plain, I see, their sympathies can never be with me.

THE LADY-BIRD.

Ah, no, poor dear! in hating you the Nettles all agree.
The Toad detests you; you should hear the Cricket's crazy cry,
For when he speaks of you, he says: "That cursèd Butterfly."

THE BUTTERFLY.

And do you hate me like the rest of all this foolish pack?

THE LADY-BIRD.

I? I adore you, for I am so happy on your back.
If you would only take me to the Lily's every day,
Oh, what a spree! But are n't you just a little tired, pray?
For if you are, we 'd better stop a minute here or two.
You do not feel the least fatigued? I cannot think you do.

THE BUTTERFLY.

You are a trifle over weight, but don't be worried, please.

THE LADY-BIRD (*pointing to some Lilies*).

Then why not enter here at once, to rest and take your ease?

THE BUTTERFLY.

Ah, thanks! They're always Lilies, then, the hosts whom you propose?

(*rakishly in a whisper.*)

I'd rather go in here next door.

THE LADY-BIRD.

To call upon the Rose?

Oh, never, never!

THE BUTTERFLY (*drawing him on*).

Come along, I tell you no one sees.

(*They enter discreetly the house of the Rose.*)

The curtain falls.

In the third act —

But I would not, my dear readers, abuse your patience any longer. I know that, at the present time, verses have lost the gift of pleasing, so I cut short my quotations, and will content myself with briefly relating the rest of my poem.

In the third act, it is quite dark. The two comrades leave the house of the Rose. The Butterfly wishes to bring the Lady-bird back to his relations, but the latter refuses: he is completely drunk, cuts capers in the grass and utters seditious cries.

The Butterfly is obliged to take him home by force. They separate on the threshold, promising soon to meet again, and then the Butterfly goes away alone into the night. He, too, is a little tipsy, but he is sad in his cups; he recalls the Lady-bird's confidences, and asks himself bitterly why so many creatures hate him who has never done harm to anybody. There is no moon in the heavens; the wind blows; the country is very black. The Butterfly is cold and afraid; but he consoles himself with thinking that his comrade is safe, tucked up in a little warm bed. In the meanwhile, through the darkness may be seen large night-birds flying silently by. The lightning flashes. Malignant creatures, lying in wait under the stones, laugh in scorn as they point to the Butterfly. "We have him," they say. And, as the poor thing flies right and left in terror, a Thistle on the path gives him a great stab, a Scorpion rends him with his claws, a huge hairy Spider tears off a fold of his blue satin mantle, and to add the finishing stroke, a Bat breaks his back with a blow of his wing. The Butterfly falls, mortally wounded, and while he gasps out his last breath on the grass, the Nettles rejoice, and the Toads say: "It is well."

At dawn, the Ants, going to their work, find his body beside the road. They scarcely glance at him, and pursue their way, without the least desire of burying him. Ants do not work for nothing. Happily a brotherhood of Necrophori happens to pass in that direction, and these are, as you know,

little black insects who have made a vow to bury the dead. They harness themselves piously to the dead Butterfly, and drag him toward the cemetery. A curious crowd presses upon them, as they go, and everybody makes reflections aloud. The little brown Crickets, seated before their doors in the sunshine, say gravely: "He was too fond of flowers!" "He was out too much at night," add the Snails, and the fat Beetles waddle along in their gold liveries, muttering: "Too much of a Bohemian; too much of a Bohemian!" In all the crowd there is no word of regret for the poor dead creature; only, in the neighboring plains, the tall lilies have closed, and the cicalas sing no more.

The last scene is laid in the cemetery of the Butterflies. After the Necrophori have accomplished their task, a solemn May-bug which has followed the procession, approaches the grave, and turning upon his back, begins the praise of the dead. Sad to say, his memory fails him; he stays there with his legs in the air, gesticulating for an hour, entangling himself in his periods. When the orator has finished, everybody goes, and then, in the empty cemetery, the Lady-bird of the earlier acts is seen crawling out from behind a tomb. All in tears, he kneels upon the fresh earth of the grave, and says a touching prayer for his poor little comrade who lies underneath.

CHAPTER IX.

YOU MUST SELL CHINA.

AT the last verse of my poem, Jacques rose in an ecstasy to cry bravo; but he stopped short on seeing the bewildered appearance of the good people there.

In truth, I believe that if the fiery horse of the Apocalypse had burst into the midst of the little yellow drawing-room, he would not have caused more amazement than my blue butterfly. Passajon and Fougeroux, all bristling with what they had just heard, looked at me with round wide-open eyes; the two Ferrouillats made signs to each other. No one said a word. You may think how much at ease I was.

Suddenly, in the midst of the general silence and consternation, a voice, — and what a voice! — pale, dull, cold and toneless, a phantom voice, arose behind the piano, and made me shudder in my chair. It was the first time in ten years that the man with the bird-like head, the venerable Lalouette, had been heard to speak. "I am very glad they killed the butterfly," said the strange old man, nibbling fiercely his bit of sugar; "I don't like butterflies."

Everybody laughed, and then began to discuss my poem.

The member of the music hall thought it was rather too long, and advised me to reduce it to the dimensions of two short songs, so as to make it essentially French in character. The student from the School of Alfort, a learned naturalist, called my attention to the fact that lady-birds had wings, which took away all reality from my fable. The younger Ferrouillat declared that he had read it all somewhere. "Don't listen to them," Jacques said to me in a whisper, "it is a masterpiece." Pierrotte said nothing; he appeared much preoccupied. Perhaps, as the good man was sitting beside his daughter all the time of the reading, he may have felt a little sensitive hand tremble in his, or he may have caught a black passionate glance upon the wing; but, however this may be, it is certain that on this occasion, Pierrotte — if I may be allowed to say so — looked very strange, and stayed all the evening hanging on to his daughter's petticoats, so that I could not say a word to the black eyes, and went home early, without staying to hear a new song from the member of the music hall, who never forgave me for it.

Two days after this memorable reading I received from Mdlle. Pierrotte a note as short as it was eloquent: "Come at once; my father knows all;" and below, my dear black eyes had written: "I love you."

I was a little disturbed, I must confess, by this important news. For two days, I had been run-

ning about to publishers with my manuscript, and was much less absorbed in the black eyes than in my poem. Then the idea of an explanation with that big peasant of a Pierrotte was not agreeable to me. So, in spite of the pressing appeal from the black eyes, I waited some time before going *over there*, repeating to myself, so as to feel secure with regard to my intentions: "When I shall have sold my poem."

Unfortunately, I did not sell it.

At that time, — I do not know if it is still the same to-day, — publishers were very kind, polite, generous, and cordial; but they had one fatal defect, and that was that they were never at home. Like certain lesser stars that are revealed only by the large telescopes of the Observatory, these gentlemen were not visible to the crowd. No matter at what hour you called, you were always told to return.

Heavens! How many of those shops I went to, and how many knobs of glass doors I turned! How many times I stationed myself outside the booksellers', saying: "Shall I go in, or shall I not go in?"

Inside it was warm, and smelt of new books. It was full of little bald, busy men who answered you from behind a counter, on the top of a double ladder. As to the publisher, he was invisible. Every evening I went home, sad, weary, and spiritless. "Courage," Jacques would say to me, "you will be luckier to-morrow." And on the next day I started on a new campaign, armed with my manu-

script. I felt it growing daily heavier and more troublesome. At first, I carried it under my arm, proudly, like a new umbrella; but in the end I was ashamed of it, and stuck it in my breast, with my coat carefully buttoned over it.

A week passed thus, and Sunday came. Jacques went as usual to dine with the Pierrottes. I was so tired with my pursuit of invisible stars that I stayed in bed all day. When he came back in the evening, he sat on the edge of my bed, and gave me a gentle scolding.

"Listen to me, Daniel. You do very wrong in not going *over there.* The black eyes are forlorn and cry for you; they are dying to see you. We talked of you all the evening. Oh, you rascal, how she loves you!"

My poor Mother Jacques had tears in his eyes as he said this.

"And how about Pierrotte?" I asked timidly. "What did Pierrotte say?"

"Nothing, but he seemed very much surprised not to see you. You must go there, Daniel; you will go, won't you?"

"I will, to-morrow, Jacques; I promise you."

While we were speaking, the White-Cuckoo, who had just gone into her room, began her interminable song — Tolocototignan! Tolocototignan! Jacques laughed. "You don't know," said he, in a whisper, "that the black eyes are jealous of our neighbor. They think she is a rival. It was useless for me to explain, for she would not believe me. The black eyes jealous of the White-Cuckoo!

It 's droll, is n't it? I pretended to laugh, too; but in my heart I was ashamed when I reflected that it was my own fault if the black eyes were jealous of the White-Cuckoo.

The next day, in the afternoon, I went to the Passage du Saumon. I should have liked to go straight up to the fourth floor and speak to the black eyes before seeing Pierrotte, but he was on the watch for me at the door of the shop, and I could not avoid him. I had to go in and sit down beside him, behind the counter. From time to time a few notes of the flute floated in unobtrusively from the back-room.

"Monsieur Daniel," said Pierrotte with an assurance of tongue and facility of elocution that I had never known him to possess before, "what I want to know from you is very simple, and I am not going to beat about the bush. If I may be allowed to say so — my little girl is in love with you. Do you really love her, too?"

"With all my soul, Monsieur Pierrotte."

"All is well, then. Here is what I have to propose to you. You and the little girl are too young to think of marrying for three years to come. So there are three years before you to obtain a position for yourself. I don't know whether you expect to remain always in the blue butterfly business, but I know what I should do in your place. If I may be allowed to say so, I should bid good-bye to my little stories and should enter the shop of Lalouette's successor; I should learn the ropes of the china trade, and should manage so that in three

Camille and Donicl.

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Goupil & Cie Paris

years, Pierrotte, who is getting old, could accept me as a partner as well as a son-in-law. Well, what do you say to that, old fellow?"

Thereupon, Pierrotte gave me a great nudge with his elbow, and began to laugh and laugh. It is certain the poor man thought he was filling me with joy, by proposing that I should sell china at his side. I had not the heart to be angry, or even to answer; I was overwhelmed.

The plates, colored glasses, and globes of alabaster were dancing round me. On a stand, opposite the counter, shepherds and shepherdesses, in delicate-tinted Parian porcelain, looked slyly at me and seemed to say as they brandished their crooks: "You must sell china!" A little farther off, grotesque Chinese figures in violet robes nodded their venerable pates, as if to approve what the shepherds said: "You must sell china!" And far away, back of the shop, the ironical and mocking flute whistled softly: "You must sell china, you must sell china!" It was enough to make me mad.

Pierrotte thought that joy and emotion had stopped my speech.

"We will talk about it this evening," said he, to give me time to recover myself. "Now, go up and see the little girl. If I may be allowed to say so, the time must seem very long to her."

I went up to the little girl, and found her installed in the yellow drawing-room, embroidering her eternal slippers, in the company of the very deserving person. May my dear Camille par-

don me, but Mdlle. Pierrotte never seemed to me so much of a Pierrotte as on that day; never had her placid manner of drawing out her needle and counting her stitches aloud caused me so much irritation. With her little red fingers, her rosy cheeks and tranquil air, she was like one of the shepherdesses in colored Parian that had been crying so impertinently to me: "You must sell china!" Luckily, the black eyes were there, too; a little veiled, and rather melancholy, but so artlessly overjoyed to see me again that I was quite touched. But this did not last long, for Pierrotte came in, almost upon my heels. He had probably lost confidence in the very deserving person.

From this moment on, the black eyes disappeared, and china triumphed all along the line. Pierrotte was very gay, talkative and unbearable; his repetitions of "if I may be allowed to say so" rained thicker than hail. The dinner was noisy and much too long. As we left the table, Pierrotte took me aside to remind me of his offer. I had had time to recover myself, and said with sufficient composure that my decision required reflection and that I should give him an answer in a month.

Pierrotte was certainly much astonished by the lack of eagerness I showed to accept his proposal, but he had the good taste not to appear so.

"It is agreed," said he, "in a month," and no more was said. No matter, the blow had fallen. Through all the evening, the sinister and fatal "You must sell china" resounded in my ears. I heard it in the nibbling of the old bird who came

in with Mme. Lalouette and established himself at the corner of the piano. I heard it in the roulades of the flute-player, and in the *Reverie of Rosellen* that Mdlle. Pierrotte did not fail to play; I read it in the gestures of those bourgeois marionnettes; in the cut of their clothes, in the design of the worsted-work hangings, in the allegory of the clock — Venus gathering a rose, out of which a tarnished Cupid was flying — in the form of the furniture, and in the slightest details of that frightful yellow drawing-room, where the same people said the same things, where the same piano played the same *Reverie* nightly, and which, through the very uniformity of the evenings spent in it, was like a tableau set to music. The yellow drawing-room, a tableau set to music! Where were you hiding then, beautiful black eyes?

When I reached home after this tiresome evening, and told my Mother Jacques of Pierrotte's offer, he was still more indignant than I.

"Daniel Eyssette in a china-shop! I declare I should like to see that!" said the dear boy, flushed with anger. "It is just as if somebody proposed selling matches to Lamartine or peddling horsehair brushes to Saint-Beuve. No, thank you, Pierrotte, you old fool! But, after all, we must n't owe him a grudge, for the poor man does n't understand. When he sees the success of your book and the newspapers all full of you, he will change his tone, sure enough."

"That may be, Jacques; but my book must come out before I am spoken of in the newspapers,

and I know that it won't come out. Why? Because, my dear fellow, I can't get hold of a publisher, and those people are never at home to poets. The great Baghavat himself is obliged to print his verses at his own expense."

"Well, we 'll do the same," said Jacques bringing down his fist on the table; "we 'll print at our own expense."

I looked at him in amazement.

"At our expense?"

"Yes, my dear boy, at our own expense. Just now, the Marquis is having the first volume of his memoirs printed. I see his printer every day: he is an Alsatian, with a red nose and a good-humored expression. I am sure he will do it on credit, and I tell you we can pay him as soon as your book sells. There, it 's all decided, and to-morrow I 'll go to see him."

In fact, the next day, Jacques goes to see the printer, and comes back enchanted. "It 's settled," says he triumphantly: "your book will be set up in type to-morrow. It will cost us nine hundred francs, and that 's a mere trifle. I shall make notes of three hundred francs each, payable every three months. Now, follow my reasoning. We sell the book at three francs a volume, and make an edition of a thousand copies; therefore your book ought to bring us in three thousand francs, — you hear what I say, — three thousand francs. Out of this we pay the printer, also the sum of one franc a copy to the booksellers who sell the book, also the expenses of sending to the

newspaper reviewers. There will remain a perfectly clear profit of eleven hundred francs. Is n't that nice for a beginning?"

Nice? I should think so. No more pursuit of invisible stars, no longer to stand humiliated at the doors of booksellers' shops, and, moreover, eleven hundred francs to lay up for rebuilding the hearth. What happiness there was that day in the tower of Saint-Germain! What projects and dreams! And then, on the following days, how many little joys, tasted drop by drop — going to the printer's, correcting the proofs, discussing the color of the cover, seeing the paper issue moist from the press, with your thoughts printed upon it, running two or three times to the binders, and finally returning with the first copy, that you open with trembling fingers. Tell me, is there anything more delicious in this world?

You may believe that the first copy of the *Pastoral Comedy* went of course to the black eyes. I carried it, that same evening, accompanied by my Mother Jacques, who wanted to enjoy my triumph. We made our entrance into the yellow drawing-room, proud and radiant. Everybody was there.

"Monsieur Pierrotte," said I to the old man, "allow me to offer my first work to Camille." And I put my volume into a dear little hand that was quivering with pleasure. Oh, if you could have seen how prettily the black eyes thanked me, and how they shone as they read my name on the cover! Pierrotte was less enthusiastic. I heard

him ask Jacques how much a volume like that might bring me in.

"Eleven hundred francs," answered Jacques with assurance.

After that, they talked for a long time in a low tone, but I did not listen to them. I was entirely blissful as I saw the black eyes cast their long silken lashes down to the pages of my book, and then lift them up toward me with admiration. My book, and the black eyes! Two joys that I owed my Mother Jacques.

That evening, before going home, we went prowling about the Galleries of the Odéon, to judge of the effect of my book in the booksellers' windows.

"Wait," said Jacques; "I am going to see how many copies they have sold."

I waited, walking up and down, and looking out of the corner of my eye at a certain green cover with black lines on it that was flaunting among the other books. Jacques rejoined me, after a minute, pale with emotion.

"My dear boy," said he, "they have already sold one copy. It is a good omen."

I pressed his hand silently. I was too much moved to speak, but I was saying to myself: "There is some one in Paris who has taken out three francs from his purse to buy the production of your brain, some one who is reading you and passing judgment upon you. Who can it be? I should like to know him soon." Alas! to my misfortune, I was soon to know this terrible person.

The day after the appearance of my book, I was lunching at the table d'hôte, next the fierce thinker, when Jacques, much out of breath, rushed into the room.

"Great news!" said he, dragging me out. "I am leaving this evening, at seven o'clock, with the Marquis. We are going to Nice, to see his sister who is dying. Don't worry about money; the Marquis has doubled my salary. I can send you a hundred francs a month. Well, what is the matter with you? You are quite pale. Come, Daniel, don't be a baby. Go back in there again, finish your lunch and drink half a bottle of Bordeaux to cheer you up. I am going to say good-bye to Pierrotte, then to inform the printer, and order some copies sent to the reviewers. I have n't a minute. We 'll meet at our room at five o'clock."

I watched him stride down the Rue Saint-Bénoît, and then returned to the restaurant; but I could neither eat nor drink, and it was the thinker who emptied the half bottle of Bordeaux. The idea that in a few hours my Mother Jacques would be far away oppressed me. It was in vain that I thought of my book, and of the black eyes; nothing could distract me from the thought that Jacques was to leave me, and that I should be alone, quite alone in Paris, my own master, and responsible for all my actions.

He joined me at the hour named. Though much moved himself, he affected the greatest cheerfulness until the last moment. Until the last

moment, also, he showed his generous soul and the wonderful strength of his love for me. He thought only of me, of my comfort, of my life. Under pretence of packing his trunk, he inspected my linen and clothes.

"Your shirts are in this corner, do you see, Daniel, and your handkerchiefs beside them, behind the cravats."

And I said:

"You are not packing your trunk, Jacques; you are looking over my wardrobe."

When the trunk was packed and the wardrobe arranged, we sent for a cab, and set off for the station.

On the way, Jacques gave me injunctions of all kinds.

"Write often, and send me all the criticisms that appear of your book, particularly Gustave Planche's. I mean to make a cardboard book and paste them all inside. It will be the golden book of the Eyssette family. By the way, you know the washerwoman comes Tuesdays. Try not to be dazzled by success. It is evident that you will have very great success, and success is extremely dangerous in Paris. I am thankful that Camille will be here to keep you from temptation, and, above all, Daniel, I ask of you to go there often, and not make the black eyes cry."

At this moment we passed in front of the Jardin des Plantes. Jacques laughed.

"Do you remember," said he, "how we passed here, one night, four or five months ago? There 's

a difference between that Daniel and this one, is n't there? Ah, you 've made a great advance in four months!"

He really believed, dear Jacques, that I had made a great advance; and I, too, poor idiot, was convinced of it.

We reached the station. The Marquis was already there, and, from a distance, I saw the odd little man, with a head like a white hedgehog, hopping up and down the waiting-room.

"Quick, quick, good-bye," said Jacques, and, taking my head in his large hands, he kissed me three or four times with all his might, and then ran to join his tormenter.

As I saw him go, I experienced a strange sensation.

All at once, I felt smaller, punier, shyer, and more childish, just as if my brother had carried away from me the marrow of my bones, my strength, my boldness, and half my stature. The crowd around me frightened me, and I became Little What 's-His-Name again.

Night was falling: slowly by the longest road, along the most deserted quays, Little What 's-His-Name regained his tower. The idea of finding the room empty, made him horribly sad. He would have liked to stay outside till morning, but he had to go in.

As he passed the lodge, the porter cried:

"Monsieur Eyssette, there is a letter for you."

It was a little note of satin texture, elegant and perfumed; the handwriting was a woman's, finer

and more feline than that of the black eyes. Whose could it be? He broke the seal quickly, and read on the stairs by the gas-light:

TO THE GENTLEMAN WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR:

The *Pastoral Comedy* has been upon my table since yesterday; but the inscription is wanting. It will be very kind if you come to write it this evening, and take a cup of tea. It is between artists, you know.

IRMA BOREL.

And lower down:

THE LADY OF THE FIRST FLOOR.

The lady of the first floor! When Little What 's-His-Name read this signature, a great quiver ran all through him. He saw her as she had appeared to him one morning, coming downstairs in a whirlwind of velvet, beautiful, cold, and imposing, with the little white scar in the corner of her mouth. When he thought that such a woman had bought his book, his heart leapt with pride.

He paused a moment on the staircase, considering whether he should go up to his room or stop on the first floor; then, suddenly, Jacques' injunction returned to his memory: "Above all, Daniel, don't make the black eyes cry." A secret presentiment warned him that if he went to see the lady of the first floor, the black eyes would cry, and Jacques would be pained. Therefore, Little What 's-His-Name put the letter resolutely in his pocket, and said to himself: "I will not go."

CHAPTER X.

IRMA BOREL.

It was the White-Cuckoo who opened the door for him, for — is there need for me to say it? — five minutes after swearing he would not go, the vain Little What 's-His-Name rang at Irma Borel's apartment. When the negress saw him, she grinned like a good-natured ogre, and beckoned with her big, shiny black hand for him to follow. After traversing two or three very stately rooms, they stopped before a mysterious little door through which could be heard, more than half stifled by the thickness of the hangings, hoarse cries, sobs, imprecations, and convulsive laughter. The negress rapped, and without waiting for an answer, introduced Little What 's-His-Name.

Alone in a rich boudoir, padded with mauve silk, and blazing with light, Irma Borel was walking up and down with long steps, declaiming. A full, sky-blue peignoir, covered with lace, floated about her like a cloud. One of the sleeves of the peignoir, gathered up to the shoulder, showed a snowy arm of incomparable whiteness, brandishing a mother-of-pearl paper-cutter that served as a dagger. The other hand, lost in folds of lace, held an open book.

Little What 's-His-Name paused, dazzled. The lady of the first floor had never seemed so lovely to him before. In the first place, she was less pale than at their former meeting. Her cheek was fresh and pink, on the contrary, but of a somewhat subdued pink, so that, on this evening, she looked like a pretty almond-blossom, and the little white scar at the corner of her lip appeared all the whiter. Then her hair, that he had not seen the first time, farther improved her by softening what was rather haughty and almost hard in her face. Her hair was blond, pale blond, as if powdered; she had a mass of it, and it was very fine, like a golden mist round her head.

When the lady saw Little What 's-His-Name, she stopped short in her declamation. She threw her paper-knife and book on the divan behind her, drew down the sleeve of her peignoir with an adorable gesture, and came forward to meet her guest, gayly offering her hand.

"Good-evening, Sir Neighbor," said she with a charming smile; "you have caught me in full tragic fury. I am learning the part of Clytemnestra; it 's exciting, is n't it?"

She made him sit beside her on the divan, and they began to talk.

"You are interested in dramatic art, Madame?" (He did not dare call her "neighbor.")

"Oh! it 's a fancy of mine, you know, just as I have been interested in sculpture and music. Still, I think it is serious this time. I am coming out in the Théâtre-Français."

As she spoke, an enormous bird with a yellow tuft, making a great noise with its wings, alit on Little What's-His-Name's curly head.

"Don't be afraid," said the lady, laughing at his bewilderment, "it is my cockatoo, a dear creature I brought with me from the Marquise Islands."

She took the bird, caressed it, said a few Spanish words to it, and put it back on a gilded perch at the other end of the room. Little What's-His-Name opened his eyes wide. The negress, the cockatoo, the Théâtre-Français, the Marquise Islands!

"What an extraordinary woman!" said he to himself in admiration.

The lady sat down beside him again, and they continued their conversation. The *Pastoral Comedy* was their first subject. The lady had read it over several times since the previous evening; she knew some of the verses by heart and recited them with enthusiasm. Little What's-His-Name's vanity had never been so flattered before. She wanted to know how old he was, where he came from, how he lived, if he went into society, and if he were in love. He answered all these questions with the greatest frankness, so that, at the end of an hour, the lady of the first floor knew all about Mother Jacques, about the story of the Eyssette family, and the poor hearth the children had sworn to rebuild. Not one word, however of Mdlle. Pierrotte; there was mention made only of a young lady in fashionable society who was dying of love for Little What's-His-Name, and of a cruel

father — poor Pierrotte! — who thwarted their passion.

In the midst of these confidences some one entered the room. It was an old sculptor, with white hair, who had given the lady lessons at the time when she was interested in modelling.

"I wager," said he in an undertone, looking mischievously at Little What 's-His-Name, "I wager this is your Neapolitan coral-fisher."

"You are right," she answered, laughing; and turning toward the coral-fisher who appeared much surprised at being thus designated: "Don't you remember," said she, "the morning we met? You were going with your neck bare, and your breast open; your hair was in disorder, and you carried a stoneware pitcher in your hand; it seemed to me that you were one of those little coral-fishers one sees in the Bay of Naples. I told my friends of it in the evening, but we had no idea then that the little coral-fisher was a great poet, and that the *Pastoral Comedy* was at the bottom of the stoneware pitcher."

You may fancy how charmed Little What 's-His-Name was to find himself treated with respectful admiration. As he was modestly bowing and smiling, the White-Cuckoo introduced a newcomer, who proved to be no other than the great Baghavat, the Indian poet of the table-d'hôte. Baghavat entered, and went straight to the lady, holding out a book with a green cover.

"I bring you back your butterflies," said he. "What an odd kind of literature!"

A gesture from the lady cut him short. He understood that the author was present, and glanced in his direction with a constrained smile. There was a moment of silence and embarrassment, to which the arrival of a third personage made a happy diversion. The latter was a professor of elocution, a hideous little humpback, with a pallid face, red wig, and bad teeth that he showed when he smiled. It seems that, without his hump, the humpback would have been the greatest actor of his time; but his infirmity not permitting him to go upon the stage, he consoled himself with teaching, and talking against all the actors of the time.

As soon as he appeared, the lady called to him:

"Have you seen the Jewess? How did she do to-night?"

The Jewess was the great actress Rachel, then at the height of her glory.

"She does worse every time," said the professor, shrugging his shoulders. "That girl has nothing to recommend her. She is a goose, a real goose."

"A real goose," answered his pupil; and after her, the two others repeated with conviction: "A real goose."

A minute later they begged the lady to recite something.

Without waiting to be asked twice, she rose, took the mother-of-pearl paper-knife, pushed back the sleeve of her peignoir and began to declaim.

Well or ill? Little What 's-His-Name would have been much perplexed as to what to say. Dazzled by that snowy arm, fascinated by that golden hair so wildly tossed about, he looked without listening. When the lady finished, he applauded louder than anybody, and declared in his turn that Rachel was but a goose, a real goose.

He dreamt all night of that snowy arm and that golden mist; and when day came, and he wanted to sit down at the rhyming-table, the enchanted arm returned to pluck him by the sleeve. Then, no longer able to rhyme, and not wishing to go out, he began to write to Jacques, and tell him of the lady of the first floor.

Ah, dear Jacques, what a woman! She knows everything, she is skilled in everything. She has written sonnets, she has painted pictures. On her mantelpiece there is a pretty Columbine in terra-cotta that she modelled herself. She has been acting in tragedy for the last three months, and already plays much better than the famous Rachel. — It certainly seems as if Rachel were no better than a goose. — In short, dear Jacques, such a woman as you have never dreamt of. She has seen everything, she has been everywhere. All at once, she says to you: "When I was at St. Petersburg;" then, another minute, she tells you she prefers the bay of Rio to that of Naples. She has a cockatoo that she has brought from the Marquise Islands, and a negress that she took with her from Port-au-Prince as she was passing through.

But, in fact, you know the negress; she is our neighbour, the White-Cuckoo. In spite of her fierce appear-

ance, the White-Cuckoo is an excellent woman, quiet, discreet, and devoted, speaking only in proverbs like the good Sancho. When the people in the house try to pump her about her mistress, as to whether she is married, or whether there is a M. Borel anywhere, or if she is as rich as she is said to be, the White-Cuckoo answers in her dialect: "Zaffai cabrite pas zaffai mouton" (The kid has no concern in the sheep's business); or again: "C'est soulié qui connaît si bas tini trou" (the shoe knows if there are holes in the stockings). She has a hundred such, and the tattlers never have the last word with her. By the way, do you know whom I met, in the drawing-room of the lady of the first floor? The Hindoo poet of the table d'hôte, the great Baghavat himself. He seems much in love with her, and writes beautiful poems in which he compares her alternately to a condor, a lotos, or a buffalo; but the lady pays small attention to his homage. Besides, she must be accustomed to it; all the artists that visit her — and I can answer for it that they are many and famous — are in love with her.

She is so beautiful, so strangely beautiful! To tell the truth, I should have fears for my heart if it were not already engaged. Fortunately, the black eyes are here to protect me. Dear black eyes! I shall go to spend this evening with them, and we shall talk about you all the time, Mother Jacques.

As Little What's-His-Name was finishing his letter, there was a soft knock at the door. It was the White-Cuckoo, sent by the lady of the first floor, with an invitation for him to come to her box to hear the goose at the Théâtre-Français. He would have accepted gladly, but he reflected that he had no coat, and was obliged to say no.

This put him in a very bad humor. "Jacques ought to have got a coat for me," thought he. "It is indispensable. When the criticisms appear, I shall have to go and see the reviewers, and what shall I do without a coat?" In the evening, he went to the Passage du Saumon, but the visit did not cheer him. Pierrotte laughed loud, and Mdlle. Pierrotte was too much of a brunette. It was in vain that the black eyes signalled to him, and said softly: "Love me," in the mystical language of the stars; the ingrate would not listen. After dinner, when the Lalouettes arrived, he ensconced himself, sad and sulky, in a corner, and all through the airs that accompanied the musical tableau, he imagined Irma Borel enthroned in an uncovered box, her snowy arm flirting her fan, and the golden mist sparkling under the lights of the house. "How ashamed I should be if she saw me here," thought he.

Several days passed without a new incident. Irma Borel gave no sign of life, and relations seemed to be interrupted between the first and the fifth floors. Every night, Little What's-His-Name, seated at his table, heard the lady's victoria come home, and, involuntarily, the dull rumble of the carriage made him thrill. He could not even hear without emotion the negress coming upstairs to her room; if he had dared, he would have gone to ask her news of her mistress. In spite of all, however, the black eyes still remained in possession of the field, and Little What's-His-Name spent long hours in their company. The rest of

the time, he shut himself up to hunt for rhymes, to the great amazement of the sparrows, who came from all the roofs round about to see him; for the sparrows of the Latin Quarter are like the very deserving person, and have odd ideas of students' attics. To make amends, the bells of Saint-Germain — those poor bells consecrated to God, and cloistered all their lives, like Carmelites — rejoiced to see their friend, Little What's-His-Name, seated eternally in front of his table, and, to encourage him, made noble music.

In the meanwhile, news came from Jacques. He was established at Nice, and gave many details of his surroundings there.

What a beautiful place, Daniel, and how the sea under my windows would inspire you! I cannot enjoy it, for I never go out. The Marquis dictates all day; what an extraordinary man he is! Sometimes, in the interval between two phrases, I lift my head and see a little red sail on the horizon, and then I have to bend over my paper again immediately. Mdlle. d'Hacqueville is still very ill; I can hear her in the room above us coughing and coughing. I myself, directly after my arrival, caught a bad cold that I cannot get rid of.

A little farther on, speaking of the lady of the first floor, Jacques said:

If you believe me, you will not go again to that woman's. She is too complex for you; and even — must I say so? — I detect the adventuress in her. Do you know I saw yesterday in the port a Dutch brig that had just made a voyage round the world, and had

come back with masts from Japan, spars from Chili, and a crew as variegated as a map of the globe. Well, my dear boy, your Irma Borel seems to me like this ship. It is good for a brig to have travelled a great deal, but it is a different thing for a woman. In general, those women who have been to so many countries show the effects of what they have seen. Don't trust her, Daniel, don't trust her, and above all, I implore you, don't make the black eyes cry.

These last words went straight to Little What's-His-Name's heart. He thought that Jacques' persistence in watching over the happiness of the girl who would not love him, was very beautiful.

"Oh, no! Jacques, don't be afraid, I won't make her cry," said he, and he immediately formed the firm resolution not to return to the lady of the first floor. You may rely on Little What 's-His-Name for firm resolutions.

When the victoria rolled in under the entrance that evening, he scarcely paid attention to it, and the song of the negress no longer distracted him. It was a September night, stormy and oppressive. All at once, he thought he heard a noise on the wooden staircase that led up to his room. He soon distinguished the sound of light footsteps and the rustle of a gown. Some one was coming up, that was sure, but who was it?

The White-Cuckoo had long gone to her room. Perhaps the lady of the first floor was coming to speak to the negress.

At the thought of this, Little What 's-His-Name felt his heart beat violently, but he had the

strength of mind to stay at his table. The steps continued to approach, reached the landing and then stopped. There was silence for a moment, and then a gentle tap on the door of the negress, who made no answer.

"It is she," thought he, without stirring from his place.

Suddenly, a perfumed light spread through the room.

The door creaked, and some one came in.

Then, without turning his head, Little What's-His-Name asked trembling:

"Who is there?"

CHAPTER XI.

THE SUGAR HEART.

IT is two months since Jacques went away, and there is, as yet, no expectation of his return. Mdlle. d'Hacqueville is dead. The Marquis, escorted by his secretary, is parading his mourning through Italy, without interrupting for a single day the terrible dictation of his memoirs. Jacques, overworked, hardly finds time to write to his brother a few lines, dated from Rome, Naples, Pisa and Palermo. But, though the postmark of his letters often changes, their text does not change. "Are you working? How are the black eyes? Has Gustave Planche's review appeared? Have you gone back to Irma Borel?" To these questions that are always the same Little What 's-His-Name invariably answers that he is working hard, that the sale of the book is going on well, and the black eyes, too; that he has not seen Irma Borel, nor heard of Gustave Planche.

How much truth is there in all this? A later letter, written by Little What 's-His-Name on a night of madness and tempest, will tell us.

MONSIEUR JACQUES EYSSETTE.
PISA.

10 o'clock on Sunday evening.

Jacques, I lied to you. For two months I have done nothing but lie to you. I write you I am working, and

for two months the ink in my inkstand has been dry. I write you that the sale of my book is going on well, and for two months not one copy has been sold. I write you that I do not see Irma Borel, and for two months I have not left her. As for the black eyes, alas! O Jacques, Jacques! why did n't I listen to you? Why did I go back to that woman?

You were right, she is an adventuress, nothing more. At first I thought she was intelligent, but it is not true; all she says, she has got from some one else. She has no brain and no heart. She is false, cynical, and wicked. In her fits of anger, I have seen her beat the negress unmercifully with a whip, throw her on the ground and stamp upon her. Moreover, she is a strong-minded woman who believes neither in God nor in the devil, and yet accepts blindly the predictions of clairvoyants and coffee-grounds. As to her talent for acting, it is useless for her to take lessons of a hunchbacked dwarf, and spend her days at home with elastic balls in her mouth; I am sure no theatre will have her. In private life, however, she is a fine actress.

How I fell into the clutches of this creature, I who love so well all that is simple and good, I really do not know, dear Jacques: but I can swear that I have got away from her, and that now everything is over between us. If you could know how base I was, and what she did with me! I told her my whole story; I spoke of you, our mother, and the black eyes. I tell you it is enough to make me die of shame. I gave her all my heart. I confided all my life to her, but she would never confide the least part of hers to me. I do not know who she is, nor from where she comes. One day, when I asked her whether she had been married, she laughed.

You remember the little scar she has on her lip; it

comes from a stab with a knife that she received off there in her country, Cuba. I wanted to know who had done it, and she answered merely: "A Spaniard named Pacheco," and not a word more. That 's idiotic, is n't it? Do I know Pacheco? Ought not she to give me some explanation? A stab with a knife, the devil take it! It 's not in the natural course of things. But there — the artists that surround her have given her the name of being strange, and she likes to keep her reputation. Oh, those artists! dear Jacques, I abhor them. If you could know how those people, by dint of living with statues and pictures, come to believe there is nothing else in the world. They always talk to you of form, line, color, and Greek art; of the Parthenon, of the flat and the curved. They examine your nose, your arm, your chin, and look to see if you have type, contour, *character;* but for what beats in our breasts, for our passions, tears, and anguish, they care as much as for a dead dog. These good people thought that there was character in my head, but none at all in my poetry. I tell you, they gave me cheering encouragement!

At the beginning of our connection, this woman thought she had caught a little prodigy, a great poet in a garret; how she bored me with that garret of hers! Later, when her circle proved to her that I was but a fool, she kept me for the character of my head. I must explain that this character differed with different people. One of her painters, considering me of the Italian type, made me pose as a piper; another, as an Algerian violet-vendor; another, — how can I remember? For the most part, I posed at her house, and, to please her, I was obliged to keep on my frippery all day, and figure in her drawing-room, beside the cockatoo. We have passed many hours thus. I, dressed as a Turk, smoking long pipes on one

corner of her sofa, and she, at the other end declaiming with elastic balls in her mouth, stopping from time to time to say: "What a characteristic head you have, dear Dani-dan!" When I was a Turk, she called me Dani-dan; and when I was an Italian, Danielo; never Daniel. Besides, I shall have the honour of figuring in these two characters at the next painting exhibition. I shall be down on the catalogue as: "Young Piper of Mme. Irma Borel," or, "Young Fellah of Mme. Irma Borel." And it will be a picture of me; how shameful!

I must stop for a minute, Jacques. I am going to open the window and breathe in the night air for a little. I am suffocating — I can see no longer.

Eleven o'oclock.

The air has done me good. If I leave the window open, I can go on with my letter. It is dark and rainy. and the bells are tolling. How sad this room is! Dear little room! I used to love it so much once, and now I am weary of it. It is *she* who has spoiled me; she has been here too often. You understand how she had me in her hands, here in the same house with her; it was very convenient for her. Oh, it was no longer the abode of work!

Whether I was at home or not, she came in at any hour, and pried about. One evening, I found her fumbling in a drawer where I keep all that I have most precious in the world, our mother's letters, yours, and those of the black eyes; these last in a box which you must recall. Just as I entered, Irma Borel held this box, and was about to open it. I had scarcely time to rush and tear it from her hands.

"What are you doing?" I cried indignantly.

She put on her most tragic air.

"I have respected your mother's letters, but these belong to me, and I want them. Give me back the box."

"What do you want to do with it?"

"To read the letters it contains."

"Never," said I. "I know nothing of your life, and you know everything of mine!"

"Oh! Dani — Dan!" — I had been a Turk that day. — "Oh! Dani — Dan, is it possible that you reproach me with that? Is n't my apartment always open to you? Don't you know all the people who come to see me?"

As she said this in her most beguiling tones, she was trying to get the box away from me.

"Very well," said I, "since it is so, I allow you to open it; but on one condition."

"What is that?"

"That you tell me where you go every morning from eight to ten o'clock."

She turned pale, and looked me straight in the eyes. I had never spoken of this to her, though it was not for lack of the desire to do so. This mysterious daily expedition puzzled and disturbed me. Like the scar, like Pacheco, and all the course of her strange existence. I should have liked to know, but, at the same time, I was afraid to learn. I felt that beneath it lay some infamous mystery that would oblige me to fly. On that day, however, I dared question her, as you see. It surprised her very much. She hesitated a moment, and then said with effort, in a muffled voice:

"Give me the box, and you shall know all."

Then I gave her the box: Jacques, it was base of me, was n't it? She opened it, with a quiver of pleasure, and began to read all the letters — there were some twenty of them — slowly, and half aloud, without skipping a line.

This fresh pure love-story seemed to interest her greatly. I had already told it to her, but in my own way, giving out the black eyes as a young girl of very noble family, whom her parents refused to marry to the little plebeian Daniel Eyssette; in this you may recognize my absurd vanity.

From time to time she paused in her reading to say: "There, that's nice," or again: "What do you think of this for a girl of noble family?" Then, as she read the letters, she put them one by one into the flame of the candle, and watched them burn, with a malicious laugh. I let her do it, for I wanted to find out where she went every morning from eight to ten.

Now, among these letters, there happened to be one written on the paper belonging to Pierrotte's shop, business paper with three little green plates at the top, and underneath: *China and Glass. Pierrotte, successor to Lalouette.* Poor black eyes, evidently one day in the shop, they had felt the need of writing me, and had been content to use the paper nearest at hand. You may imagine what a discovery it was for the actress! Until then, she had believed in my story of a girl of noble family, and highborn parents; but when she came to this letter, she understood everything and burst into loud laughter.

"This, then, is your young patrician, your pearl of an aristocratic faubourg — her name is Pierrotte and she sells china in the Passage du Saumon. Ah, I understand now why you did not want to give me the box!" And she laughed and laughed.

My dear Jacques, I do not know what possessed me, whether it was shame, spite or rage, but I could stand it no longer, and threw myself upon her to seize the letters. She was frightened, stepped backwards, and, becoming entangled in her train, fell with a shrill cry. Her horrible

negress heard her from the next room and ran in at once, half-naked, black, hideous and dishevelled. I wanted to prevent her from coming in, but with the back of her big oily hand she nailed me against the wall, and placed herself between her mistress and me.

In the meantime, her mistress had picked herself up, and was pretending to cry. While she cried, she continued to ransack the box.

"You don't know," said she to her negress, "you don't know why he wanted to beat me? Because I discovered that his noble young lady is not noble at all, and that she sells plates in the Passage du Saumon."

"Those who wear spurs are n't horse-jockeys," said the old woman, talking in proverbs.

"There, look," said the actress, "look at the love-tokens his shop-girl gave him. A few hairs from her head and a nosegay of violets bought for a sou. Bring your lamp here, White-Cuckoo!"

The negress brought her lamp; the hair and the flowers blazed and crackled. I let her go on; I was utterly overwhelmed.

"Oh! what 's this?" the actress went on as she unfolded a bit of tissue-paper. "A tooth? No, it looks like sugar. Yes, upon my word, it 's an allegorical lollipop, a little sugar heart."

Alas, one day, at the fair of Prés-Saint-Gervais the black eyes had bought this little sugar heart and had given it to me, saying:

"I give you my heart."

The negress looked at it with a covetous eye.

"Do you want it, Cuckoo?" cried her mistress. "Well, catch it."

And she threw it into her mouth as if into a dog's. Perhaps it is absurd, but when I heard the sugar crack in

the negress' jaws, I shuddered from head to foot. It seemed to me that it was really the heart of the black eyes that this monster with black teeth was devouring so joyously.

You may think, poor Jacques, that after this all was over between us? I may as well tell you that if, on the day after this scene, you had gone into Irma Borel's apartment, you would have found her reciting the part of Hermione with her hunchback; and, squatting in a corner, on a mat, beside the cockatoo, you would have seen a young Turk, with a great pipe which went three times round his body. What a characteristic head you have. Dani-Dan!

"But, at least," you will say, "for the price of your infamy you found out what you wanted to know, and what became of her every morning from eight to ten?" Yes, Jacques, I found it out, but only this morning, after a terrible scene — and it will be the last, I promise you — that I am going to tell you of. But, hush! Somebody is coming upstairs. If it were she, and if she came to hunt me out again? She is quite capable of it, even after what has passed. Wait! I am going to double-lock the door. She won't come in, don't be frightened.

She must not come in.

Midnight.

It was not she; it was her negress. That surprised me, too; I had not heard her carriage return. The White-Cuckoo has just gone to bed. Through the partition, I can hear the gurgling of the bottle and the horrible tune, *Tolocototignan*. Now, she is snoring; it sounds like the pendulum of a great clock.

This is the way our sad love-affair ended.

About three weeks ago, the hunchback who gives her lessons declared that she was ripe for success in tragedy,

and that he wanted her, with certain others of his scholars, to give a performance.

My actress was enchanted. As there was no theatre to be had, it was agreed that the studio of one of her friends should be turned into a playhouse, and that invitations should be issued to all the managers of the Parisian theatres. As to the choice of a play for the first appearance, after much discussion, *Athalie* was decided upon. It was the one of all their stock pieces that the hunchback's scholars knew best. Nothing was needed to put it into running order, except a few rehearsals to make it a little smoother. So it was to be *Athalie.* As Irma Borel was too great a lady to put herself out, the rehearsals took place in her house. Every day the hunchback brought his pupils, four or five tall, thin, solemn girls, draped in French cashmere shawls at thirteen francs fifty apiece, and three or four poor devils with dirty paper costumes and heads like ship-wrecked men. They rehearsed all day, except from eight to ten; for, in spite of the preparations for the performance, the mysterious expeditions had not ceased. Irma, the hunchback, the pupils, and everybody worked like mad. For two days they forgot to feed the cockatoo. As to young Dani-dan, nobody paid attention to him. In short, everything was going on well: the studio was decorated, the stage erected, the costumes were ready, and the invitations sent, when, three or four days before the performance, the young Éliacin — a little girl of ten, the hunchback's niece — fell ill. What was to be done? Where could an Éliacin be found — a child capable of learning his part in three days? There was general consternation. Suddenly, Irma Borel turned to me:

"By the way, Dani-Dan, suppose you should undertake it?"

"I! You are joking. At my age!"

"He thinks himself a man, does n't he? But, my little fellow, you look as if you were fifteen, and, on the stage, when you are dressed and painted, you won't look more than twelve. Besides, the part is quite in the character of your head."

It was useless for me to struggle, dear Jacques. I had to do as she wanted, as usual. I am such a coward.

The play took place. Ah, if I had the heart to write, how I might amuse you with the account of that day! They had counted upon the managers of the Gymnase and the Théâtre-Français; but it turned out that these gentlemen were engaged elsewhere, and we had to be contented with a manager from the suburbs, brought in at the last moment. On the whole, this little family show did not go off badly. Irma Borel was warmly applauded. I thought this Cuban Athalie was too emphatic, that she lacked expression, and spoke French like a Spanish sparrow; but, pooh! her friends the artists were not so critical. Her costume was authentic, her ankles slender, and her head well set on her shoulders. That was all they wanted. As for me, my characteristic head achieved a great success. Not so great, however, as that of the White-Cuckoo in her mute rôle of nurse. It is true that the head of the negress was still more characteristic than mine. So when, at the fifth act, she appeared, holding on her wrist the enormous cockatoo, — the actress had insisted that her Turk, her negress, and her cockatoo should all figure in the play, — and rolling her big, white, ferocious eyes with an expression of amazement, there was a tremendous explosion of bravos in the room.

"What a success!" said the radiant Athalie.

Jacques, Jacques! I hear her carriage returning. Oh, the wretched woman! Where does she come from

to me? Then she must have forgotten our horrible morning, which still makes me tremble.

The door has shut again. If she only does not come up here. You see how dreadful it is to live so near to a woman one loves.

One o'clock.

The play I have been telling you about took place three days ago.

During these three days she has been gay, sweet, affectionate and charming. She has not once beaten her negress. Several times she has asked me news of you, and if you still coughed: yet, God knows, she does not love you. I ought to have suspected something.

This morning she came into my room as it was striking nine. Nine o'clock! I had never seen her at that hour. She approached me, and said smiling:

"It is nine o'clock."

Then becoming suddenly serious:

"My dear," said she, "I have deceived you. When we met I was not free. There was a man in my life when you came into it; a man to whom I owe my luxury, my leisure, all I have." I told you, Jacques, that the mystery covered some infamy.

"From the first day I knew you, this connection became odious to me. If I did not tell you of it, it was because I knew you were too proud to consent to share me with another. If I did not break it, it was because it was hard for me to renounce this indolent and luxurious existence, for which I was born. To-day, I can live thus no longer. The falsehood weighs upon me, the daily deceit drives me mad. And, if you still want me after the confession I have just made to you, I am ready to give all and to live with you in a corner, wherever you go."

These last words "wherever you like" were said in a whisper, close to me, almost upon my lips, to intoxicate me.

I had the courage, however, to answer, even very dryly, that I was poor, that I did not earn my own living, and could not ask Jacques to support her.

At this reply, she raised her head proudly.

"Well, if I have found an honorable and sure means for both of us to earn our living without separating, what should you say?"

Thereupon, she drew from her pocket a stamped paper with some rigmarole upon it that she proceeded to read to me. It was an engagement for both of us at a theatre in one of the suburbs of Paris; for her, at the rate of a hundred francs a month, for me, at the rate of fifty. All was ready, and we had but to sign.

I looked at her in terror. I felt that she was dragging me into a hole, and I feared for a moment lest I was not strong enough to resist. When she had finished reading the jargon, without giving me time to answer, she began to speak excitedly of the splendors of a theatrical career, and of the glorious life we should lead there, free, proud, and far from the world, all alone with art and love.

She said too much, and that was a mistake. I had time to recover myself, and invoke Mother Jacques in the depths of my heart; so that when she had finished her tirade, I could say to her very coldly:

"I don't wish to be an actor."

Of course she did not let go, but began her fine speeches again.

Her trouble went for nothing, for to all she could say to me, I answered only one thing:

"I do not wish to be an actor."

She began to lose patience.

"Then," said she, turning pale, "you prefer to have me return there from eight to ten, and to have things remain as they are."

To this I replied, somewhat less coldly:

"I prefer nothing. I think it is very honorable of you to wish to earn your living and no longer owe it to the generosity of the gentleman from eight to ten. I merely repeat to you that I do not feel I have the slightest theatrical vocation, and that I will not be an actor."

At this, she burst out:

"Ah! you don't want to be an actor? What will you be, then? Do you think, perhaps, that you are a poet? He thinks himself a poet! But you have no qualifications for it, poor fool! Because you have printed a miserable book that nobody wants, you think yourself a poet. You wretch! Your book is idiotic, and everybody says so. For the two months that it has been for sale, but one copy has been sold, and that is mine. You, a poet, come now! Nobody but your brother could believe in such folly. He, too, is a nice simpleton, and has written you some very good letters. He is enough to make one die laughing with his review by Gustave Planche. In the meanwhile he works himself to death to support you, and you, all the time, you — you — what is it, indeed, that you do? Do you know yourself? Because your head happens to have a certain character of its own, you are satisfied; you dress like a Turk, and think that is enough. In the first place, I warn you that for some time your head has been losing its character, and you are ugly, very ugly. There, look at yourself now! I am sure that if you went back to your Pierrotte girl, she would n't have you; and yet you are made for each other. You were both born to sell china in the Passage du Saumon. That would suit you far better than going on the stage."

She foamed at the mouth and strangled. You never saw such frenzy. I looked at her without speaking. When she finished, I approached her, — I was trembling in every fibre, — and said calmly:

"I don't wish to be an actor." With that, I went toward the door, opened it, and showed it to her.

"You want me to go," said she, with a sneer. "Oh, not yet! I have still much more to say."

Then I could control myself no longer. The blood rushed to my face. I seized one of the fire-irons and ran toward her. I can tell you that she decamped quickly. My dear Jacques, at that time I could understand the Spaniard Pacheco.

After she had left me, I took my hat and went downstairs. I kept on running about all day, like a drunken man. Ah, if you had been there! Once, I thought of going to Pierrotte, of falling at his feet, and asking forgiveness from the black eyes. I went as far as the shop-door, but I did not dare enter. It is two months since I have been there. They have written me, but I have not answered; they have come after me, and I have hidden myself. How could they forgive me? Pierrotte was sitting on his counter, and looked sad. I stayed a minute watching him through the pane, then I fled, weeping.

I went home at night, and wept for a long time by the window; after this, I began to write you. I shall write thus all night. It seems to me that you are with me, that I am talking with you, and that does me good.

What a monster that woman is! How sure she was of me! She thought me her plaything, her chattel. Do you understand? She thought she could carry me off to act in the suburbs. Advise me, Jacques, I am weary and miserable. She has done me much harm, you see; I no longer believe in myself; I doubt and fear. What shall

I do? Work? Alas! she is right; I am no poet; my book has not sold, and what are you to do about paying for it?

All my life is ruined. I can see my way no farther. I know nothing more. It is all dark. There are names that are predestined. Her name is Irma Borel. In our country Borel means torturer, — Irma the torturer! How well it suits her! I should like to go away from here. This room is odious to me, and then, I am exposed to meeting her on the stairs. But don't worry, for if she ever should come up — But she will not come. She has forgotten me. She has her artists to console her.

O my God! what do I hear? Jacques, my dear Jacques, it is she. I tell you it is she. She is coming here. I know her step. She is there, quite near. I can hear her breathe. Her eye is looking at me through the key-hole, is burning me, is —

This letter was never sent.

CHAPTER XII.

TOLOCOTOTIGNAN.

I HAVE now reached the most sombre pages of my story, the days of misery and shame that Daniel Eyssette spent by the side of this woman, an actor in a suburb of Paris. Strange to say, this time of my life, passed amid a whirl of variety and tumult, has left me remorse rather than recollections.

All this part of my memory is confused, and I can remember nothing at all.

But wait a minute! I have but to close my eyes and to hum two or three times the strange and melancholy refrain: *Tolocototignan, Tolocototignan!* and instantly, as if by magic, my slumbering memories will awake, the dead hours will arise from their tomb, and I shall again see Little What's-His-Name, such as he was then, in a large new house on the Boulevard Montparnasse, between Irma Borel reciting her parts and the White-Cuckoo singing unceasingly: *Tolocototignan, Tolocototignan!*

Oh, that horrible house! I can see it yet; I can see it with its thousand windows, its green and slimy stairs, its yawning sinks, its numbered doors, and its long white corridors smelling of

fresh paint, — fresh and yet already soiled! There were eight hundred rooms in it; in every room a family. And what families! All day long there were scenes, screams, uproar and quarrels; at night, the wailing of children, the sound of bare feet walking over bricks, and the uniform rocking of cradles. From time to time, for a variety, there were visits from the police.

It was there, in that furnished cave, seven stories high, that Irma Borel and Little What 's-His-Name came to find a shelter for their love. They chose it because it was near the theatre, and besides, as in all new houses, the rent was not dear. For forty francs, — a price only for those who are willing to live within newly plastered walls — they had two rooms on the second floor, with a strip of balcony on the boulevard, the finest apartment in the palace. They went in every evening toward midnight, after the play was over. It was gloomy returning through the long deserted avenues, in which were prowling silent figures in blouses, girls without hats and night-watchmen in long gray overcoats.

They walked quickly in the middle of the street. On arriving, they found a little cold meat on a corner of the table, and White-Cuckoo, the negress, waiting for them — for Irma Borel had kept the White-Cuckoo. M. Eight-till-Ten had taken back his coachman, his furniture, his plate and his carriage. Irma Borel kept her negress, her cockatoo, a few jewels and all her gowns. These, of course, she only wore now on the stage, as the trains of

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Goupil & Co. Paris

velvet and watered silk were not made to sweep suburban boulevards. The gowns alone occupied one of the two rooms. They were hung all around on steel hooks, and their long silken folds and vivid hues contrasted strangely with the discolored floor and faded furniture. The negress slept in this room. There she had established her straw-mattress, her horseshoe and brandy-bottle; but, for fear of fire, no light was allowed her. So, at night, when the pair returned, the White-Cuckoo, crouching on her mattress in the moonlight, among those mysterious gowns, looked like an old witch whom Bluebeard had left in charge of his seven wives hanging on the wall. The other room, the smaller, was for the other two and the cockatoo. There was just space for a bed, three chairs, a table, and a great perch with gilded sticks.

Sad and narrow as their dwelling was, they never left it. The time they were not at the theatre they spent at home studying their parts, and I assure you they made a great hubbub. From one end of the house to the other could be heard their dramatic shrieks: "My daughter, give me back my daughter! — This way, Gaspard! — Her name, her name, you wr-wr-wretch!" And through it all, the piercing cries of the parrot and the shrill voice of the White-Cuckoo who kept on eternally singing: "*Tolocototignan, tolocototignan!*"

Irma Borel was happy. She liked the life; it amused her to play at the housekeeping of poor artists. "I regret nothing," she said often. What should she have regretted? The day which was

to find her weary of poverty, tired of drinking wine by the litre, and eating the hideous portions covered with brown sauce that were sent up from a cheap eating-house, the day she should be satiated with the dramatic art of the suburbs, on that very day, she knew well she could resume her former existence. She needed but lift a finger to regain all that she had lost.

It was the consciousness of this other string to her bow that gave her courage and made her say: "I regret nothing." She regretted nothing, but did not *he* regret?

They had both made their appearance in *Gaspardo the Fisherman*, one of the very finest pieces of meretricious melodrama. She was much applauded in it, — certainly not for her talent, for her voice was bad and her gestures ridiculous, — but for her snowy arms and velvet gowns. The public in those quarters is not accustomed to exhibitions of dazzling flesh-tints and magnificent gowns at forty francs a yard. In the house they said: "She is a duchess!" and the young workingmen, wonder-struck, clapped to a deafening degree.

He did not have the same success. They thought he was too little; then, he was frightened and ashamed. He spoke low, as if at confession, and they cried to him: "Louder, louder!" But his throat contracted, choking the words in their passage, and he was hissed. What else could you expect? It was useless for Irma to say anything, for he had not the vocation. After all, being a bad poet is no reason for being a good actor.

The creole consoled him as best she could. "They have not taken in the characteristic style of your head," she said to him often; but the manager did not deceive himself about the character of it. After two stormy performances, he sent for him to come to his office and said to him: "Melodrama is not for you, little fellow. We have made a mistake. Let us try light comedy. I think you will do that very well." And the next day, they tried light comedy. He played the part of the young comic hero, the flurried coxcomb who is made to drink effervescing lemonade for champagne and runs round the stage holding on to his stomach; the simpleton in a red wig who cries like a moon-calf, and the country beau who rolls his stupid eyes about and says "Mam'selle, I love you; it 's true, I love you awfully."

He played the peasant, the comic dancer, and all the ugly parts that make people laugh; and truth compels me to say that he did it pretty well. The poor wretch was successful; he amused the audience.

Explain, if you can, how it happened that it was on the stage when he was plastered over with paint and covered with tawdry finery, that Little What 's-His-Name thought of Jacques and the black eyes. It was in the midst of grimaces and buffoonery that the images of all those dear people whom he had so basely betrayed rose suddenly before him.

Almost every evening, and the working-men of the vicinity can testify to it, he would stop short

in the middle of a tirade, and remain standing there, speechless, and open-mouthed, staring at the audience. At those times, his soul would leave his body, clear the foot-lights, cleave the roof of the theatre with a blow of its wing, and fly far away to embrace Jacques and Mme. Eyssette, and ask forgiveness of the black eyes, complaining bitterly all the while of the miserable profession he was forced to follow.

"Yes, it's true, I love you awfully!" said the prompter's voice all of a sudden, and then, unhappy Little What 's-His-Name, snatched from his dream and fallen from heaven, rolled about his dazed and wide-open eyes in so natural and ludicrous a bewilderment that all the audience burst into loud laughter. In theatrical slang this is what is called producing an effect. Involuntarily, he had managed to produce an effect.

The company to which he belonged, acted in several different places. It was a kind of strolling company, playing sometimes at Grenelle, and sometimes at Montparnasse, or at Sèvres, Sceaux, or at Saint-Cloud. In going from one point to another, they all piled into the theatre omnibus, — an old cream-colored omnibus drawn by a consumptive horse. On the way, they sang and played cards, and those who did not know their parts sat at the farther end, reading over the play. That was Little What 's-His-Name 's place.

There he stayed silent and sad as comic actors are, his ears deaf to all the trivialities that were buzzing about him. Low as he had fallen, this

waggon-load of strolling players was still beneath him. He was ashamed to find himself in such society. The women still clung to pretensions of a long-past youth, and were faded, painted, affected and pompous. The men were common creatures, without ideals or orthography, sons of barbers or fritter-vendors, who had become actors through laziness and the desire of idleness; because they loved costumes and spangles, and longed to show themselves on the boards in pale pink tights and coats à la Souwaroff; low-lived fops, always absorbed in their dress, spending their wages at the hairdresser's, and telling you with an air of conviction: "I have worked very hard to-day," when they had passed five hours making a pair of Louis XV. boots with two yards of glazed paper. Truly it was a pity to have jeered at Pierrotte's musical parties, to end in that omnibus.

Because of his sulky air and haughty silence his comrades did not love him. "He is a sly one" they said. To make amends, the creole had won all hearts. She sat in the omnibus, enthroned like a princess on a lark, laughing merrily, and threw back her head to show her slender throat; familiar with everybody, she called the men: "old fellow," and the women: "little dear," forcing even the most churlish to say of her: "She is a good girl." A good girl, — what irony!

Jogging on thus, amid laughter and a fire of coarse jokes, they reached the theatre where the performance was to take place. When the play was over, they undressed in a twinkling, and got

into the omnibus to return to Paris. It was late at night then; they talked in whispers and nudged one another in the darkness. Occasionally, there was a smothered laugh. At the octroi of the Faubourg du Maine, the omnibus stopped, and was put up. Everybody got out, and all went in a body to escort Irma Borel to the door of the great tenement house, where the White-Cuckoo, more than half-tipsy, was waiting for them with her melancholy song: *Tolocototignan, tolocototignan!*

To see them rivetted thus, one to the other, it might be supposed that they loved each other. No, they did not love each other. They knew each other too well for that. He knew that she was false, cold, and heartless. She knew that he was weak and tame-spirited even to cowardice. She thought: "One fine morning his brother will come and take him away from me to give him back to that girl who sells china." He said: "One of these days, weary of the life she is leading, she will fly away with M. Eight-till-Ten, and I, I shall be left alone in the mire." This eternal fear of losing each other was what they had that was nearest to love. They did not love each other, and yet they were jealous.

Strange, is n't it, that there may be jealousy where there is no love. Well! It was so. When she spoke in an intimate way to anybody belonging to the theatre, he turned pale. When he received a letter, she flung herself upon it, and tore open the seal with trembling hands. It was gen-

erally a letter from Jacques. She read it to the end with a sneer, and then threw it on some piece of furniture, saying disdainfully that it was always the same thing. Alas! yes, it was always the same thing, that is to say, the same devotion, generosity and self-abnegation. It was for that she hated my brother so much.

But Jacques never suspected. He suspected nothing. Little What's-His-Name wrote him that all was going well, that the edition of the *Pastoral Comedy* was nearly sold, and that, when the notes fell due, all the money needed to meet them could be had from the booksellers. Trustful and kind as ever, he continued to send the hundred francs a month to the Rue Bonaparte, where the White-Cuckoo went to get them.

With Jacques' hundred francs and their salaries from the theatre, they certainly had enough to live on, especially in that quarter of poor devils. But neither one nor the other knew, as they say, what money is: he, because he had never had any; she, because she had always had too much. So, what a waste they made of it! At the fifth of the month their coffer — a little Javan slipper of maize-straw — was empty. In the first place, there was the cockatoo that alone cost as much to feed as a human being. Then came paint, black for the eyes, rice-powder, opiates, false whiskers, and all the apparatus needed for the theatrical make-up. Moreover, the play books were too old and worn; Madame wanted new ones. She also required flowers, quantities of flowers. She

would rather have gone without eating than have seen her flower-stands empty.

In two months' time, they were over head and ears in debt. They owed for their lodgings, to the restaurant, and to the porter of the theatre. Sometimes a creditor grew tired of waiting, and came to make a disturbance in the morning. On these occasions, in despair of everything, they rushed to the printer of the *Pastoral Comedy*, and borrowed a few louis from him in Jacques' name. The printer, who had in hand the second volume of the famous memoirs, and knew that Jacques continued to be secretary to M. d'Hacqueville, opened his purse without misgivings. The money thus borrowed gradually mounted up to four hundred francs, which, added to the nine hundred for the *Pastoral Comedy*, brought Jacques' debt up to thirteen hundred francs.

My poor Mother Jacques! How many disasters awaited him at his return! Daniel gone, the black eyes in tears, not a single volume sold, and thirteen hundred francs to pay. How should he ever extricate himself from all this? The creole did not care, but the thought of it never left Little What 's-His-Name. It was an obsession, a perpetual anguish. It was in vain that he sought forgetfulness in working like a galley-slave (and good God! what kind of work it was) in learning new buffoonery, and studying new grimaces before the mirror; the mirror always returned him Jacques' image instead of his own; between the lines of his part, instead of Langlumeau, Josias, and the other

comic characters, he saw only the name of Jacques, —Jacques, Jacques, always Jacques.

Each morning he looked at the calendar in terror, and, counting the days that separated him from the time when the notes were to fall due, he thought with a shudder: "But one month more, but three weeks more." For he knew that at the first protested note, all would be discovered, and that his brother's martyrdom would then begin. This idea pursued him even in his sleep. Sometimes he started up at night, a weight on his heart, and his face bathed in tears, with the confused recollection of a strange and terrible dream he had just had.

This dream was always the same and returned almost every night. In it he saw an unfamiliar room, in which there stood a great wardrobe, ornamented with old wrought-iron work. Jacques was there, pale, horribly pale, stretched out upon a sofa; he had just died. Camille Pierrotte was there, too, standing in front of the wardrobe; she was trying to open it, to take out a shroud, but she could not succeed in doing so; and while she was fumbling about the lock with the key, she could be heard saying in a heart-rending voice: "I cannot open it: I have cried too much; I can see no more."

However much he struggled against it, this dream made upon him an impression beyond all reason. As soon as he closed his eyes, he saw Jacques lying stretched out on the sofa, and Camille, blind, in front of the wardrobe. His re-

morse and terror made him daily more sombre and irritable. The creole, on her part, was patient no longer. Besides, she felt vaguely that he was escaping her, though she knew not how, and it exasperated her. There were constant terrible scenes between them, with shrieks and abuse worthy of a boatful of washerwomen.

She said to him: "Go back to your Pierrotte, and get her to give you more sugar hearts."

And he returned at once: "Go back to your Pacheco, and get him to stab you in the lip."

She called him "Philistine!"

And he answered "Hussy!"

Then they burst into tears and generously forgave each other, to begin again the next day.

It was thus that they lived, — no, that they wallowed together, fettered by the same irons, lying in the same gutter. It is this disgraceful existence and these miserable hours that pass to-day before my eyes, when I hum the strange and melancholy refrain of the negress: *Tolocototignan, tolocototignan!*

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ESCAPE.

It was toward nine, one evening, at the theatre Montparnasse. Little What 's-His-Name, who had played in the first piece, had just finished and was returning to his dressing-room. On the way he met Irma Borel going to the stage. She was radiant, all dressed in velvet and lace, a fan in her hand, like Célimène.

"Go out and sit in the theatre," said she; "I am in the right mood, and shall be very fine."

He hastened to his dressing-room and undressed very quickly. This room, which he shared with two fellow-actors, was a closet without a window; it had a low ceiling, and was lighted from the roof. Two or three straw chairs made up the furniture. Along the walls were hung fragments of looking-glass, uncurled wigs, tattered tinsel, faded velvet, and tarnished gold lace. On the ground, in a corner, were rouge-pots without covers, and powder-puffs worn bare.

Little What 's-His-Name had been there for a minute, engaged in taking off his things, when he heard a scene-shifter calling from below: "Monsieur Daniel! Monsieur Daniel!" He left the

dressing-room, and, leaning over the damp wooden banisters, asked: "Who is it?" Then, finding that no one answered, he went down, as he was, half-clad, daubed with white and red paint, his great yellow wig falling over his eyes.

At the foot of the stairs he stumbled against some one. "Jacques," he cried, starting back.

It was Jacques. They looked at each other for a moment, without speaking, and then Jacques clasped his hands, and murmured in a gentle, tearful voice: "Oh, Daniel!" That was enough. Little What 's-His-Name, stirred to the bottom of his heart, looked about him like a timid child, and said very low, so low that his brother could scarcely hear him: "Take me away from here, Jacques."

Jacques shuddered, and taking him by the hand, drew him outside. A cab was waiting at the door, and they got into it. "Rue des Dames, at the Batignolles," cried Mother Jacques. "That 's my district," answered the coachman cheerfully, and the carriage moved off.

Jacques had been for two days in Paris. He came from Palermo, where a letter from Pierrotte, that had been following him for three months, had finally reached him. This letter, brief and to the point, told him of Daniel's disappearance.

On reading it, Jacques guessed everything. He said to himself: "The boy is up to mischief; I must go to him." And he asked the Marquis on the spot to give him leave of absence.

"Leave of absence!" said the old gentleman,

with a jump. "Are you crazy? What about my memoirs?"

"Only a week, sir. Just time enough to go and come! My brother's life is at stake."

"I don't care a straw for your brother. Did not I warn you when you entered my employ? Have you forgotten our agreement?"

"No, sir; but —"

"Buts are of no account. It will be with you as with the others. If you leave your place for a week, you shall never return to it. Reflect upon it, please; and, wait a minute, while you are reflecting, sit down there. I am going to dictate."

"I have reflected, sir. I must go."

"Go to the devil."

Whereupon the stubborn old man took his hat, and set out for the French Consulate to inquire for a new secretary.

Jacques left that same evening. On reaching Paris, he hastened to the Rue Bonaparte. "Is my brother upstairs?" he cried to the porter, who was smoking his pipe in the court-yard, sitting astride the well. The porter began to laugh. "He has been out for some time," said he slyly.

The man wanted to keep silence, but a five-franc piece unlocked his lips. He then told how, for a long time, the little fellow of the fifth floor and the lady of the first had disappeared, and were hiding in Paris, nobody knew where, but they certainly were together, for White-Cuckoo, the negress came every month to see if anything had come for them. He added that M. Daniel had

forgotten to give him warning when he went away, and still owed four months' rent, not to speak of other smaller debts.

"That is all right," said Jacques; "it will all be paid." And without losing an instant, without even taking time to shake off the dust of his journey, he started in pursuit of his child.

He went first to the printer, thinking correctly, that, as the general depositary of the *Pastoral Comedy* was there, Daniel must have often gone there too.

"I was going to write you," said the printer, as he saw him come in. "You know the first note falls due in four days."

Jacques answered calmly: "I have not forgotten it. To-morrow I am going to make a round of the booksellers. They have money to remit me. The book has sold very well."

The printer opened his big blue Alsatian eyes inordinately wide.

"What? The book has sold well? Who told you that?"

Jacques turned pale, foreseeing a catastrophe.

"Look in that corner," continued the Alsatian, "at all those piles of books. That is the *Pastoral Comedy*. During the five months it has been offered for sale, but one single copy of it has been sold. At last the booksellers got tired of it, and sent me the volumes they had in stock. Now, all that is only good to sell as waste paper. It is a pity, for it was well printed."

Every word from this man fell on Jacques' head

like the blows of a loaded cane; but what finished him was hearing that Daniel had borrowed money in his name from the printer.

"No later than yesterday," said the pitiless Alsatian, "he sent me a hideous negress to ask me for two louis; but I refused point-blank. First, because this mysterious errand-bearer with a head like a chimney-sweep, did not inspire me with confidence; and, then, you understand, M. Eyssette, I am not rich, and have already advanced more than four hundred francs to your brother."

"I know," answered Jacques proudly, "but you need not be alarmed, for your money will soon be returned to you." Then he went out very quickly for fear of showing his emotion. In the street, he was obliged to sit down on a curb-stone, for his legs were giving way under him. His child flown, his place lost, the printer's money to be returned, the room, the porter, and the note to fall due the next day, all buzzed and whirled in his brain. Suddenly he rose. "The debts first," thought he; "they are the most important." And in spite of his brother's base conduct toward the Pierrottes, he turned toward them without hesitation.

As he entered the china shop, Jacques saw behind the counter a large, yellow, bloated face that he did not recognize at first; but at the noise of the door opening, the large face was lifted and the owner of it, perceiving who it was that had come in, uttered a resounding: "If I may be allowed to say so" about which there was no mis-

take. Poor Pierrotte! His daughter's sorrow had made another man of him. The old jovial and rubicund Pierrotte no longer existed. The tears his little girl had been shedding for the last five months had reddened his eyes, and altered his cheek. On his discolored lips the old hearty laugh had now given place to a cold and silent smile, the smile of widows or forsaken maidens. It was no longer Pierrotte, but Ariadne or Nina.

Otherwise, there was nothing changed in the china shop. The colored shepherdesses, and the fat Chinamen in purple, still smiled beatifically on the high shelves, among the Bohemian glass and flowered plates. The rounded soup-tureens, and painted china lamps continued to glitter in the same places behind the same glass doors, and in the backroom the same flute warbled on as unobtrusively as ever.

"It is I, Pierrotte," said my Mother Jacques, steadying his voice; "I have come to ask a great favor of you. Will you lend me fifteen hundred francs?"

Pierrotte, without speaking, opened his cash-box, and moved a few coins about in it; then, shutting the drawer, he rose quietly.

"I have not got them here, Monsieur Jacques. Wait a moment while I go upstairs for them." Before leaving the shop, he added in a constrained manner: "I don't ask you to go upstairs with me; it would give her too much pain."

Jacques sighed. "You are right, Pierrotte; it is better for me not to go up."

In five minutes, Pierrotte came back with two notes of a thousand francs each, which he put into Jacques' hand. Jacques did not want to accept them: "I need only fifteen hundred francs," said he. But Pierrotte insisted.

"I entreat you to keep it all, Monsieur Jacques," said he. "I care very much about your having the two thousand francs, for that is the sum that Mademoiselle lent me long ago to buy a substitute. If you should refuse me — if I may be allowed to say so — I should be mortally offended with you."

Jacques dared not refuse; he put the money in his pocket, and, holding out his hand to the old man, said very simply: "Good-bye, Pierrotte, and thank you." Pierrotte kept his hand in his.

They stayed for some time thus, face to face, in silent emotion. Daniel's name was on the lips of both, but neither ventured to pronounce it, through the same feeling of delicacy. This father and this mother understood each other so well! Jacques was the first gently to disengage his hand: the tears were coming, and he was in haste to go. Pierrotte went with him to the street door, but there the poor man could no longer contain the bitterness that filled his heart, and began reproachfully: "Ah, Monsieur Jacques, Monsieur Jacques! If I may be allowed to say so —" but he was too much agitated to accomplish his translation, and could only repeat twice over: "If I may be allowed to say so, if I may be allowed to say so." Oh, yes! he might well have been allowed to say so!

After parting with Pierrotte, Jacques went back to the printer. In spite of the Alsatian's protestations, he insisted upon returning him immediately the four hundred francs lent to Daniel. He left with him, besides, to quiet his anxiety, money to meet the three notes that were to fall due; and, his heart being lighter after this, he said to himself: "Now let me look up my boy." But, unfortunately, the hour was already too advanced to admit of his setting out in pursuit on that day; moreover, the fatigue of the journey, the emotion, and the little dry, continuous cough that had long been undermining his strength, had so broken my poor Mother Jacques, that he was obliged to return to the Rue Bonaparte to take a little rest.

Ah! when he entered the little room, and in the setting light of the old October sun, again saw all those objects that reminded him of his boy, the rhyming-table before the window, his glass, inkstand, and his short pipe like the Abbé Germane's; when he heard the good bells of Saint Germain ring, a little hoarsely on account of the fog, when the evening *angelus* — that melancholy *angelus* that Daniel loved so dearly — came beating its wings against the damp panes, only a mother could understand what my Mother Jacques suffered.

He walked several times round the room, looking everywhere, opening all the cupboards in the hope of finding something that might put him on the track of the fugitive. But, alas! the cupboards were empty; there was nothing left but some old linen in tatters. All the room spoke of

disaster and desertion. His brother had not simply gone away, he had fled. In one corner, on the ground, was a candlestick, and in the fireplace, under a heap of burnt papers, a white box with gilt lines. He recognized this box; in it were kept the letters of the black eyes. Now, he found it in the ashes; what sacrilege!

Continuing his researches, he discovered, in the table-drawer, several sheets of paper covered with an irregular, uncertain handwriting, Daniel's handwriting when he was inspired. "It must be a poem," thought Jacques, going nearer the window to read it. It was indeed a poem, a lugubrious poem, that began thus:

"Jacques, I have lied to you. For two months, I have done nothing but lie to you." This letter had never been sent, but, as you see, it reached its destination, nevertheless. This time, Providence took the place of the post.

Jacques read it from beginning to end. When he reached the passage in the letter that mentioned the engagement at Mont-Parnasse, so persistently offered and so firmly refused, he jumped with joy:

"I know where he is," he cried; and, putting the letter in his pocket, went to bed easier in mind; but, although overcome with fatigue, he did not sleep. His wretched cough never stopped. At the first gleam of dawn, an autumnal dawn, slow and chill, he rose quickly. His plan was made.

He picked up the rags remaining in the corners of the cupboards, and packed them in his trunk,

not forgetting the little box with gold lines; and after a last farewell to the old tower of Saint-Germain, he went away, leaving everything open, the door, the window, the cupboards, so that nothing of their happy life should be left in that dwelling, which was henceforth to be inhabited by others. Downstairs, he gave up possession of the room, paid the belated rent; then, without answering the porter's insidious questions, he hailed a passing cab, and had himself driven to the Hôtel Pilois, Rue des Dames, at the Batignolles.

This hotel was kept by a brother of old Pilois, the Marquis's cook. People could take lodgings there only by the quarter, and upon recommendation, so the house had a particularly good reputation in the district. To live at the Hôtel Pilois was a certificate of respectability and good behavior. Jacques, who had gained the confidence of the Vatel of the d'Hacqueville establishment, brought a basket of Marsala wine from him to his brother.

This was a sufficient recommendation, and when he asked timidly if he might become a lodger there, he was given, without hesitation, a fine room on the ground-floor, with windows opening on the garden of the hotel — I was going to say of the convent. The garden was not large: three or four acacias, a square of shabby grass, — the grass of the Batignolles, — a fig-tree without figs, a sickly vine and a few chrysanthemum roots made up the sum of it; but at all events it served to add cheer to the room, that was naturally rather damp and gloomy.

Jacques went to work to settle himself without losing a moment; he drove in nails, put away his linen, set up a rack for Daniel's pipes, hung Mme. Eyssette's picture at the head of the bed, in fact, tried his best to do away with the air of commonplaceness that infects furnished lodgings; then, when he had thoroughly established himself, he took a mouthful of lunch, and went out immediately afterwards. On his way, he stopped to tell M. Pilois that on that evening, as a great exception, he might come back rather late, and asked to have a nice supper prepared in his room, with places for two, and some old wine. Instead of appearing pleased with this extra, the good M. Pilois blushed up to the tips of his ears, like a newly-ordained curate.

"I don't know," said he, with embarrassment. "The rules of the hotel are opposed to it; we have some ecclesiastics who —"

Jacques smiled: "Oh, very well! I understand. It is the two places that alarm you. Don't be frightened, my dear Monsieur Pilois, it is not a woman." And then, to himself, on his way to Montparnasse, he said: "And yet it is a woman, a weak woman, a foolish child, who must never be left alone again."

Tell me why it was my Mother Jacques was so sure of finding me at Montparnasse. It was quite possible for me, since the time I had written the terrible letter that was never sent, to have left the theatre, or I might never have entered it. And yet it could not have been so, for maternal instinct

guided him. He felt convinced he should find me there, and bring me home that same evening; only, he thought, and rightly: "To take him away, he must be alone, and that woman must suspect nothing." This is what prevented his going directly to the theatre for information. The green-room is a great place for gossip, and a word might have given the alarm. He preferred to rely only upon the advertisements, and went in haste to consult them.

The play-bills of suburban theatres are placed at the doors of wine shops in the same district, behind a grating, just like the publications of marriage in the villages of Alsace. As Jacques read them, he uttered a cry of joy.

The theatre of Montparnasse was to give, on that evening, *Marie-Jeanne*, a drama in five acts, performed by Mmes. Irma Borel, Désirée Levrault, Guigne, etc.

Preceded by: —

Love and Prunes, a farce in one act, by MM. Daniel, Antonin and Mdlle. Léontine.

"All is well," thought he. "They are not to play in the same piece. I am sure of success."

And he went into a café of the Luxembourg to await the hour for carrying out his plan.

When evening came, he went to the theatre. The play had already begun. He walked for about an hour under the arcade in front of the door, with the municipal guards.

Now and then the applause inside reached him like a sound of distant hail, and it hurt him to

think that perhaps it was his boy's buffoonery they were clapping thus. Toward nine o'clock a crowd of people rushed out noisily into the street. The farce was over, and some of the people were still laughing. They were whistling and shouting to one another: "Oho! Pilouitt! Lala-itou!" and all the vociferations of the Parisian menagerie. It was certainly not like the end of the Italian opera! He waited a moment longer, lost in the throng, then, when it was nearly time for the next play, and everybody was returning, he slipped into a black and slimy alley at the side of the theatre — the entrance for the actors, — and asked to speak with Mme. Irma Borel.

"Impossible," was the answer. "She is on the stage."

My Mother Jacques was a very savage in artifice. He said in his calmest manner, "Since I cannot see Mme. Irma Borel, be so kind as to call M. Daniel; he will take my message to her."

A minute later my Mother Jacques had recovered his child and was bearing him swiftly away to the other end of Paris.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DREAM.

"LOOK about you, Daniel," said my Mother Jacques, as we entered the room at the Hôtel Pilois: "it is like the night of your arrival in Paris."

In fact, as on that night, a good supper was waiting for us on a very white cloth; the pasty smelt delicious, the wine looked very old, and the reflections of the clear candle-light were dancing in the bottom of the glasses. And yet, and yet, it was not the same thing. There are some joys that we may not live over again. The supper was the same, but we missed the flower of our old boon-companions, the fresh ardors of arrival, the projects for work, the dreams of glory, and the blessed confidence that brings laughter, and gives an appetite. Not one, alas! not one of those revellers of the past would come to M. Pilois! They had all stayed in the tower of Saint-Germain; at the last moment, Mirth, who had promised to be at the feast, sent word that she could not come.

Oh, no! it was not the same thing. I understood it so well that Jacques' remark, instead of cheering me, brought a flood of tears to my eyes. I am sure that, at the bottom of his heart, he, too, wanted

to cry; but he had the strength of mind to restrain himself, and said to me with a little affectation of gayety: "Come, Daniel, you have cried enough; you have been doing nothing else for an hour." (In the carriage, while he was talking to me, I had never ceased sobbing upon his shoulder.) "This is an odd reception to give me. Positively, you remind me of the darkest days in my history, the time of the glue-pots and 'Jacques, you are an ass!' Come, dry your tears, young penitent, and look at yourself in the glass, for it will make you laugh."

I looked in the glass, but it did not make me laugh. I was ashamed of myself. My yellow wig was pasted down flat on my forehead, and my cheeks were daubed with white and red; tears and perspiration were running over them; it was hideous! In a movement of disgust, I tore off my wig, but just as I was going to fling it away, I reflected, and hung it up in the very middle of the wall.

Jacques looked at me in great surprise. "Why do you put it there, Daniel?" said he. "It is very ugly, like the trophy of an Apache warrior. We shall look as if we had scalped Punchinello."

I answered very gravely: "No, Jacques, it is not a trophy. It is my remorse, the palpable and visible sign of my remorse that I mean to keep always before me."

There was the shadow of a bitter smile on Jacques' lips, but he recovered his cheerful expression directly. "Let us leave all that alone; now that

you have taken off all that stuff, and I can see your dear phiz again, let's sit down, old fellow, I am dying with hunger."

It was not true; he was not hungry, nor was I. Good God! no. It was in vain that I put a bold front on the supper; all that I ate stuck in my throat, and in spite of my efforts to be calm, I watered my plate with silent tears. Jacques was watching me out of the corner of his eye, and said presently: "Why are you crying? Are you sorry to be here? Are you angry with me for having carried you off?"

I answered sadly: "That is unkind, Jacques, but I have given you the right to say anything."

We kept on eating for some time, or, rather, pretending to eat. In the end, impatient of the comedy we were playing, one for the sake of the other, Jacques pushed back his plate and rose: "Our supper is n't a success," said he; "we had better go to bed."

We have a proverb that says: "Torture and sleep are poor bedfellows," and I found it out that night. It was torture to me to think of all the good my Mother Jacques had done me and all the evil I had returned him; to compare my life to his, my selfishness to his devotion, my cowardly, childish soul with his heroic heart that had taken as a motto: "There is but one *happiness* on earth, the happiness of others." It was also torture to say to myself: "Now, my life is ruined. I have lost Jacques' confidence, the love of the black eyes, and my own self-respect. What will become of me?"

This terrible anguish kept me awake till morning. Jacques did not sleep either. I heard him turning and turning on his pillow and coughing a little hard cough that attracted my attention. Once I asked very softly: "You are coughing, Jacques; are you ill?" He answered: "It's nothing; go to sleep," and I understood by his manner that he was more angry with me than he liked to show. This idea redoubled my grief, and I set to crying again, all by myself under the sheet, for such a long, long, time that I ended by going to sleep. If torture of mind prevents one from sleeping, tears are a narcotic.

When I woke, it was bright daylight. Jacques was no longer at my side. I thought he had gone out; but, on pushing aside the curtains, I saw him at the other end of the room, stretched out on the sofa, and so pale, oh, so pale! I know not what terrible thought flashed through my brain. "Jacques!" I cried, rushing toward him. He was asleep, my cry did not wake him. Strange to say, his face wore in sleep an expression of great suffering which I had never seen on it, but which, nevertheless, was not new to me. His wasted features and lengthened face, the pallor of his cheeks and the abnormal transparence of his hands, all gave me pain to see, but a pain that I had felt before.

And yet Jacques had never been ill: he had never had before that bluish half-circle under his eyes, or that emaciated face. In what earlier world, then, could I have had a vision of these things? All at once, the remembrance of my

dream came back to me. Yes, that is it, this is the Jacques of my dream, pale, horribly pale, stretched out on a sofa; he has just died. Jacques has died, Daniel Eyssette, and it is you who have killed him. At this moment a dim ray of sunlight comes in timidly at the window, and runs, like a lizard over the pale inanimate face. Oh, joy! The dead is awakened; he rubs his eyes, and seeing me stand before him, says with a bright smile:

"Good morning, Daniel; have you slept well? I coughed so much that I lay on the sofa in order to avoid disturbing you."

While he is speaking to me so calmly, I feel my legs still trembling from the horrible vision I have just had, and I say in my secret heart:

"Eternal God, save my Mother Jacques to me!"

In spite of this sad awakening, our morning was cheerful enough. We succeeded even in finding an echo of our old happy laughter, when I discovered, in dressing, that for all clothing I possessed a pair of short fustian breeches, and a red waistcoat with wide flaps, part of an old theatrical costume that I happened to have on at the moment Jacques came to carry me off.

"The deuce, my dear boy!" said Jacques, "a fellow can't think of everything. It is only the insensible Don Juans who remember a fair lady's wardrobe when they are eloping with her. But don't mind; I am going to get you some new clothes, and it will be like your first arrival in Paris."

He said this to please me, for he felt like me that it was not the same thing any more.

"Come, Daniel," continued dear Jacques, seeing me turn moody again, "let us give up thinking of the past. Here is a new life opening before us; let us enter it without remorse, and without mistrust, and try only not to allow it to play us the same pranks as the old one. I do not ask you what you mean to do now, my dear brother, but it seems to me that if you wish to undertake a new poem, this will be a good place for you to work in. The room is quiet, and there are birds singing in the garden. You can put the rhyming-table in front of the window."

I interrupted him quickly: "No, Jacques, no more poems, no more rhymes. Those are fancies that cost too dear. What I want now is to do like you, to work and earn my living, and help you with all my power to rebuild the hearth."

He answered with a calm smile: "These are fine projects, little blue butterfly; but this is not what is required of you. It is not a question of earning your own living, and if you would but promise — But, there! We will talk of this later. Now let us go and buy your clothes."

To go out, I was forced to put on an overcoat that reached down to my heels and gave me the appearance of a Piedmontese musician; I needed nothing else but a harp to complete the resemblance. A few months before, if I had been obliged to walk out in such attire, I should have died with shame; but for the time being, I had

other shames to think about, and though the women might laugh at me as I passed, it was not as it used to be in the time of my india-rubbers. Oh, no, it was not the same thing!

"Now that you are a Christian," said my Mother Jacques, as we came out from the clothier's, "I shall take you back to the Hôtel Pilois; and then I am going to see if the iron-merchant whose books I kept before I went away wants to give me any more work. Pierrotte's money won't last forever, and I must think about our bread and butter."

I felt a desire to say: "Well, Jacques, go back to your iron-merchant. I can find the way home alone." But I knew why he was doing this, it was to be sure that I should not return to Montparnasse. Ah, if he could have read my soul!

To put him at ease, I let him take me to the hotel; but he had hardly turned his back when I took flight into the street. I, too, had errands to do.

When I returned, it was late. A tall shadow was walking restlessly through the fog in the garden. It was my Mother Jacques. "It is well you have come," said he, shivering, "I was going to start for Montparnasse."

I felt angry for a moment: "You doubt me too much, Jacques; it is not generous. Will it be always so? Shall you never trust me again? I swear, by all I hold dearest in the world, that I have not been where you think, that that woman is dead to me, that I shall never see her again,

that you have completely won me back, and that the terrible past from which your love has rescued me has left me only remorse, and not a single regret. What else must I say to convince you? Ah, you are cruel! I should like to open my breast to you, so that you could see I am not lying."

What he answered me I cannot recall; but I remember that in the dusk I saw him shake his head sadly, as if to say: "Alas! I wish I could believe you," and yet I was sincere in speaking as I did. No doubt that alone, I should never have had the courage to tear myself from that woman, but now the chain was broken I felt inexpressible relief. It was with me as with those people who try to kill themselves with charcoal, and repent at the last minute, when it is too late and they are already strangled and paralysed by asphyxia; suddenly, the neighbors arrive, the door flies into fragments, the reviving air circulates through the room, and the poor suicides drink it in with joy, happy to live still, and promising never to do such a thing again. So it was that I, after five months of moral asphyxia, breathed in through my nostrils the pure strong air of an honest life; I filled my lungs with it, and I swear to God that I had no desire to turn back again. But Jacques would not believe me, and all the oaths in the world would not have convinced him of my sincerity. Poor boy, I had done him so much unkindness!

We passed this first evening at home, seated in

the chimney-corner as in winter, for the room was damp, and the fog came in from the garden and penetrated the marrow of our bones. Then, you know, if you are sad, it is cheering to have a little fire. Jacques worked at accounts. In his absence the iron-merchant had tried keeping his books himself, and the result was such a terrible muddle, such a confusion of debit and credit, that now a month's hard work was needed to put things back into order. As you may imagine, I should have liked nothing better than to help my Mother Jacques in this task, but blue butterflies know nothing about arithmetic, and after an hour spent over these big account books, ruled with red, and filled with strange hieroglyphics, I was obliged to fling away my pen.

Jacques succeeded marvellously in this arid task. He charged head first into the thickest of the figures, unabashed by the long columns. From time to time, he turned from his work to me, and said, rather troubled by my silent reverie:

"We are comfortable, are n't we? At least, you are not sorry to be here?"

I was not sorry to be there, but I was sad to see him work so hard, and thought very bitterly: "Why am I in the world? I can do nothing with my hands. I don't earn my place in the sun of life: I am good for nothing but tormenting others, and bringing tears to the eyes that love me." Saying this, I thought of the black eyes, and looked mournfully at the little box with gold

lines that Jacques had put, perhaps intentionally, on the square top of the clock. How much that box recalled! How many eloquent discourses it addressed me from the height of its bronze pedestal. "The black eyes gave you their heart, and what have you done with it?" it said to me, "You have thrown it as food for beasts. The White-Cuckoo has devoured it."

As I still kept a gleam of hope in the depths of my heart, I endeavoured to call back to life, and warm with my breath all those earlier joys that I had slain with my own hand. I thought: "The White-Cuckoo has devoured it! The White-Cuckoo has devoured it."

This long melancholy evening spent in front of the fire, in labour and reverie, represents very well the new life we were henceforth to lead. All the days that followed were like this evening. It was not Jacques who did the dreaming, you may well believe. He stayed for ten hours, bent over his big books, immersed to his neck in figures. All this time I stirred the fire, and as I stirred, I said to the little box with gold lines: "Speak to me of the black eyes, will you?" Speaking to Jacques of them was not to be thought of. For one reason or another, we avoided carefully all conversation on this subject; not even a word of Pierrotte, nothing. So I took my revenge with the little box, and our talk never ended.

Toward the middle of the day, when I saw my Mother Jacques absorbed in his books, I stepped to the door as softly as a cat, and slipped

noiselessly out, saying: "Just for a little while, Jacques." He never asked where I was going, but I understood by his troubled expression and the anxious tone in which he said: "You are going out?" that he put no great trust in me. The idea of that woman always pursued him: he thought: "If he sees her again, we are lost."

And who can tell? Perhaps he was right. Perhaps if I had seen the enchantress again, I should again have submitted to the charm that she exercised over me, with her pale golden hair and the white scar at the corner of her lip. But, thank God, I never saw her again. Some M. Eight-till-Ten, no doubt, made her forget her Dani-Dan, and never, never again, did I hear of her nor of her negress, the White-Cuckoo.

One evening, on returning from one of my mysterious wanderings, I entered the room with a cry of joy. "Jacques! Jacques! Good news, I have found a place. I have been running about the streets, looking for this, for ten days without telling you. Now, it's settled; I have a place. To-morrow I am to begin as general superintendent at the Ouly Institute at Montmartre, very near us. I shall be there from seven in the morning till seven at night. It is a long time to be away from you, but, at least, I shall earn my living, and shall relieve you a little."

Jacques looked up from his accounts, and answered rather coldly: "Really, it is time for you to come to my help. The expenses are too heavy for me to shoulder alone. I don't know what is

the matter with me, but for some time I have felt quite worn out." A violent fit of coughing cut him short. He let his pen fall sadly, and went and threw himself on the sofa. As I saw him lying there, pale, horribly pale, the terrible vision of my dream again passed before my eyes; but it was but a flash, for almost immediately my Mother Jacques rose and began to laugh as he saw my scared face.

"It's nothing, you foolish boy; only a little fatigue. I have worked too hard lately; but now that you have found a place, I shall take it more easily, and in a week I shall be well again."

He said this so naturally, and with so cheerful an expression that my sad presentiments took flight, and for a whole long month I heard no more of the beating of their black wings.

The next day, I entered the Ouly Institute.

In spite of its pompous title, the Ouly Institute was a droll little school, kept by an old lady with side curls, whom the children called "sweetheart." There were some twenty little fellows there, but they were very little; of the kind, you know, that come to school carrying their lunch in a basket, and always have a little end of shirt-tail sticking out.

Such were our scholars. Mme. Ouly taught them psalms, and I initiated them into the mysteries of the alphabet. Besides this, it was my duty to superintend them at recreation, in a court-yard where there were chickens and a turkey-cock, of which the little gentlemen were greatly afraid.

Sometimes, too, when "sweetheart" had the gout, it was I who swept the schoolroom, a task much beneath the dignity of a general superintendent, but which nevertheless I performed without repugnance, so happy was I to earn my living. When I returned to the Hôtel Pilois in the evening, I found dinner served and my Mother Jacques waiting for me. After dinner, we strode several times round the garden, and then sat down by the fireside. It was thus we lived. Occasionally, we had a letter from M. or Mme. Eyssette, and this was a great event for us. Mme. Eyssette continued to live with our Uncle Baptiste. M. Eyssette was always travelling for the company of wine-merchants. Things were not going too much amiss; the debts at Lyons were three-quarters paid. In a year or two, all would be in order, and we could think of living together again.

My idea was to get Mme. Eyssette to come to us meanwhile, but Jacques would not allow it. "No, not yet," said he, with a strange expression, "not yet. Let us wait a little." This reply of his, that was always the same, broke my heart. I said to myself: "He distrusts me; he is afraid of my doing some other foolish thing while our mother is here. It is for this he still wishes to wait." I was mistaken; it was not for this Jacques said: "Let us wait a little."

CHAPTER XV.

. . . . . .

READER, if you are strong-minded, if you laugh at dreams, if you have never felt your heart pierced — pierced till you cried aloud — by the presentiment of things to come, if you are a man of positive opinions, and cast-iron intelligence, who never receives an impression from anything short of actual reality, nor allows a particle of superstition to remain in any corner of his brain; if you are willing in no case to believe in the supernatural, nor to admit the inexplicable, do not finish reading these memoirs. What remains for me to say in these last chapters is true as eternal truth; but you will not believe it.

It was the 4th of December.

I came home from the Ouly Institute more quickly than usual. On that morning I had left Jacques at home, complaining of great fatigue, and I was anxious to find out how he was. In going through the garden, I stumbled against M. Pilois, who was standing by the fig-tree, talking in a low voice with a short, stout individual, who had big fat hands, and seemed to find a great deal of trouble in buttoning his gloves.

I meant to excuse myself and pass on, but the hotel-keeper held me back.

"A word with you, Monsieur Daniel." Then, turning to his companion, he added:

"This is the young man we were speaking of. I think you would do well to inform him —"

I stopped, greatly puzzled. Of what did this stout fellow want to inform me? Of his gloves being much too small for his paws? The deuce, I could see that for myself.

There was a moment of silence and embarrassment. M. Pilois, with his head in the air, stared at the fig-tree as if he were looking for figs that were not there. The man with the gloves kept tugging at his buttonholes. In the end, however, he decided to speak, but without letting go the button, you may be sure.

"Sir," said he, "I have been the doctor of the Hôtel Pilois for twenty years, and I venture to say —"

I did not let him finish his sentence. The word "doctor" had told me all. "You have come for my brother?" I asked, trembling. "He is very ill, is n't he?"

I don't think the doctor was a bad man, but at that moment he was more occupied with his gloves than anything else, and without reflecting that he was speaking to Jacques' brother, or trying to soften the blow, he answered brutally: "I should think he was ill; he won't live through the night."

I assure you the stroke was well-aimed. The house, garden, M. Pilois, and the doctor all spun round before my eyes, and I was obliged to lean against the fig-tree. The doctor of the Hôtel Pilois

had a strong arm! Moreover, he observed nothing, and continued with the greatest calm, still buttoning his gloves: "It is a fearful case of galloping consumption. There is nothing to be done, at least nothing of any account. Besides, I was sent for much too late, as usual."

"It is not my fault, doctor," said the good M. Pilois, who persisted in looking for figs with the greatest care, — this was his way of hiding his tears, — "it is not my fault. I have known for a long time that poor M. Eyssette was ill, and I have often advised him to send for somebody, but he never would. I am certain he was afraid of alarming his brother. Those boys are so united, you see."

A desperate sob burst from the depths of my being.

"Come, my boy, courage!" said the man with the gloves, trying to appear kind. "Who can tell? Science has said the last word, but nature has not yet spoken. I shall come back to-morrow morning."

Thereupon, he turned about and walked off with a sigh of satisfaction; he had just succeeded in buttoning one button.

I stayed outside a moment longer to dry my eyes and calm myself a little; then, summoning all my courage, I entered the room with an air of deliberation.

What I saw as I opened the door, terrified me. Jacques, in order to leave me the bed, no doubt, had had a mattress placed on the sofa, and it was

there I found him, pale, horribly pale, entirely like the Jacques of my dream.

My first thought was to throw myself upon him, to take him in my arms, and carry him to the bed, no matter where, but to take him away from there, my God, to take him away from there. Then suddenly, I reflected: "You cannot, he is too tall for you to lift!" And then, seeing that my Mother Jacques remained stretched out in that place, where the dream had told me he was to die, my courage left me; the mask of constrained cheerfulness we put on our faces to reassure the dying, would no longer hold in place, and I fell on my knees by the sofa, shedding a torrent of tears.

Jacques turned painfully toward me.

"It 's you, Daniel — You have met the doctor, have n't you? I begged that fellow not to frighten you, but I see by your face that he paid no attention to me, and that you know all. Give me your hand, little brother. Who the deuce could have suspected anything like this? Some people go to Nice to cure a trouble in the lungs, but I went there to get one. It is quite original. Oh! you know, if you cry you will take away all my courage, and I am not so very brave at any rate. This morning, after you had gone away, I felt that I was breaking up; I sent for the curé of Saint-Pierre; he came to see me, and is coming back presently to administer the sacraments to me. It will please our mother, you know. The priest is a good fellow, and his name is like that of your friend at the school of Sarlande."

He could not speak any longer, and fell back on the pillow with his eyes shut. I thought he was going to die, and began to cry in a loud voice: "Jacques, Jacques, dear Jacques!" He made signs to me several times, without speaking, to be quiet.

At this moment the door opened, and M. Pilois entered the room, followed by a stout man, who rolled like a ball toward the sofa, crying: "What is it I hear, Monsieur Jacques? If I may be allowed to say so —"

How do you do, Pierrotte?" said Jacques, opening his eyes; "how do you do, old friend? I was quite sure you would come at the first word from me. Let him sit down there, Daniel; we have to talk to each other."

Pierrotte bent over his big head to the pale lips of the dying man, and they remained thus for a long time, speaking in a low tone. I watched them, motionless in the middle of the room. I still had my books under my arm. M. Pilois took them gently away from me, saying something that I did not hear; then, he went to light the candles, and spread a large white napkin on the table. I said to myself: "Why does he set the table? Are we going to dine? I am not hungry."

Night was falling. Outside, in the garden, the people of the hotel were making signs to one another, looking at our windows. Jacques and Pierrotte kept on talking. From time to time, I could hear Pierrotte say in his powerful voice, full of tears: "Yes, Monsieur Jacques; yes, Monsieur

Jacques," but I dared not go nearer. In the end, however, Jacques called me, and bade me sit down at the bedside, next Pierrotte.

"My dearest Daniel," said he, after a long pause; "I am very sad to be obliged to leave you, but one thing gives me comfort: I do not leave you alone in life. You will have Pierrotte with you, kind Pierrotte who forgives you, and promises to take my place with you."

"Oh, yes! Monsieur Jacques, I promise, — if I may be allowed to say so, — I promise."

"Do you see, poor little boy," continued my Mother Jacques, "you will never succeed alone in rebuilding the hearth. I don't say this to pain you, but you are a bad rebuilder of hearths. Yet I think that, with Pierrotte's aid, you will succeed in realizing our dream. I don't ask you to try to be a man, for, like the Abbé Germane, I think you will be a child all your life. But I implore you to be always a good child, a brave child, and, above all, — come a little nearer, so I may say this in your ear, — and, above all, don't make the black eyes cry."

Here my poor dear brother stopped again to rest a minute; then he went on:

"When all is over, you must write to Papa and Mamma; only you must let them know gradually, for it would give them too much pain to learn it all at once. Do you understand now why I would not send for Mamma to come here? I did not want her to be here now, for it would be too hard for a mother."

He broke off and looked toward the door.

"There is the holy sacrament," said he with a smile, and made us a sign to stand aloof.

It was the priest coming with the sacrament. The eucharist and holy oils were placed on the white cloth, in the midst of the candles. After this, the priest approached the bed and the ceremony began.

When it was over — and oh, how long the time seemed to me! — when it was over, Jacques called me softly to him.

"Kiss me," said he, and his voice was so weak that it sounded as if he were speaking from far away; and indeed he must have been far away, as it was now nearly twelve hours since the swift and horrible disease had thrown him down on his wasted back and was carrying him off to death at a triple gallop.

Then, as I stooped to kiss him, my hand met his hand, his dear hand damp with the death-sweat. I seized it, and never let it go. We remained thus, for I know not how much time, — perhaps an hour, perhaps an eternity, I cannot tell at all. He could see me no longer, he no longer spoke; only several times his hand stirred in mine, as if to say: "I feel that you are there." Suddenly a long tremor quivered through his poor body from head to foot. I saw his eyes open and gaze about, as if he were looking for somebody, and, as I bent over him, I heard him say twice, very low: "Jacques, you are an ass; Jacques, you are an ass!" — then, nothing more. He was dead.

Oh, my dream!

There was a great deal of wind that night, December was flinging sleet in handfuls against the panes. On the table, at the other end of the room, a silver crucifix shone between two candles. On his knees before the Christ, a strange priest was praying in a strong voice, above the noise of the wind. I neither prayed nor wept. I had but one idea, a fixed idea, and that was to warm the hand of my beloved, that I was holding tightly clasped in mine. Alas! the nearer morning approached, the heavier and icier grew the hand.

All at once, the priest who was reciting the Latin prayers across the room, before the Christ, rose, came to me, and tapped me on the shoulder. "Try to pray," said he; "it will do you good."

It was then only that I recognized him. He was my old friend at the school of Sarlande, the Abbé Germane himself, with his noble, scarred face, and his look of a dragoon in a cassock.

I was so overwhelmed with misery that I was not surprised to see him; it seemed to me quite natural. But this is how he happened to be there.

The day Little What 's-His-Name was leaving the school, the Abbé Germane had said to him: "I have a brother in Paris, a good fellow who is a priest, — but pooh! why should I give you his address? I am sure you would not go to see him." See the hand of destiny in this! The Abbé's brother was parish priest of the church of Saint-Pierre at Montmartre, and it was he whom my poor Mother Jacques had called to his death-bed.

Just at that time it fell out that the Abbé Germane was passing through Paris and staying at the priest's house. On the evening of the 4th of December, his brother said to him as he came in:

"I have just carried extreme unction to a poor boy who is dying very near here. You must pray for him, Abbé."

The Abbé answered: "I will go in there to-morrow, after saying mass. What is his name?"

"Wait a moment, it is a name of the South, rather hard to remember — Jacques Eyssette; yes, that 's it, Jacques Eyssette."

This name recalled to the Abbé a certain little under-master of his acquaintance, and he hastened to the Hôtel Pilois without losing a moment. As he entered, he saw me standing, clinging to Jacques' hand. He did not wish to intrude upon my grief, and sent away everybody, saying that he would watch with me; then he knelt down, and it was not till very late at night that, becoming alarmed by my staying motionless for so long a time he tapped on my shoulder and made himself known to me.

From that moment I do not remember clearly what happened. The end of that terrible night, the following day, the day after that, and many other days still, have left me but vague and confused recollections. There is a great gap in my memory. Nevertheless, I remember, — but as things that occurred centuries ago, — a long interminable walk through the mud of Paris, behind a black carriage. I can see myself going bareheaded

between Pierrotte and the Abbé Germane. A cold rain, mingled with sleet, beats in our faces; Pierrotte has a big umbrella, but he holds it so awkwardly, and the rain falls so fast that the Abbé's cassock looks all glossy, and is dripping with water. It rains, and rains, oh, how it rains!

Near us, beside the carriage, walks a tall man, all in black, carrying an ebony rod. He is the master of ceremonies, a sort of chamberlain of death. Like all chamberlains, he wears a silk cloak, a sword, short trousers, and an opera hat. Is it an hallucination of my mind? It seems to me this man looks like M. Viot, the inspector-general of the school of Sarlande. He is tall like him; like him he holds his head bent to one side, and every time he looks at me, he puts on the same forced and icy smile that played over the lips of the terrible key-bearer. It is not M. Viot, but it is perhaps his shadow.

The black carriage keeps advancing, but so slowly, so slowly. It seems to me as if we should never reach the end of our road. At last here we are in a dreary garden, full of yellowish mud, in which we sink up to the ankles. We stop at the brink of a great pit. Men in short cloaks bring a large and very heavy box which must be lowered. The task is difficult, for the ropes are stiff with rain, and will not slip easily. I hear one of the men crying: "The feet foremost! The feet foremost." Opposite me, on the other side of the pit, the shadow of M. Viot, with his head on one side, continues to smile faintly at me. Tall, thin, and

muffled in mourning garments, his figure stands out against the gray sky, like a great black grasshopper, soaking wet.

Now I am alone with Pierrotte. We are passing through the Faubourg Montmartre. Pierrotte is looking for a cab, but he cannot find one. I walk beside him, hat in hand; I think I am always following the hearse. All along the Faubourg, the people turn to see the stout man who is crying and calling for a cab, and the boy who is walking bareheaded through a pelting rain.

We keep on walking and walking. I am weary, and my head is heavy. Here at last we come to the Passage du Saumon, and to the china shop with its painted shutters, dripping with green water. Without entering the shop, we go up to Pierrotte's apartment. On the first floor, my strength gives way. I sit down on the stairs. It is impossible for me to go farther; my head is too — Then Pierrotte takes me in his arms, and while he is carrying me up, more than half dead and shaking with fever, I hear the hail pattering against the windows that look out on the street, and the water spouting noisily from the gutters in the court-yard. It rains, and rains; oh, how it rains!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE END OF THE DREAM.

LITTLE What 's-His-Name is ill; Little What 's-His-Name is going to die. In front of the Passage du Saumon, a litter of straw that is changed every two or three days, makes the people in the street say: "There is some rich old fellow up there dying." It is not a rich old fellow who is going to die; it is Little What 's-His-Name. All the doctors have given him up. Two typhoid fevers in two years are a great deal too much for his little humming-bird brain. Come, quick, harness the black carriage! Let the black grasshopper prepare his ebony wand, and his mournful smile! Little What 's-His-Name is ill; Little What 's-His-Name is going to die.

You should see the consternation in Pierrotte's house. Pierrotte does not sleep, and the black eyes are in despair. The very deserving person turns the leaves of her Raspail in frenzy, imploring the blessed Saint Camphor to perform a new miracle in behalf of her dear patient. The yellow drawing-room is shut up, the piano mute, the flute silent. But the most heart-breaking of all, oh! the most heart-breaking of all is a little black

figure seated in a corner of the house, knitting from morning till night, speechless, and shedding big tears.

Now, while in Pierrotte's house they are lamenting day and night, Little What's-His-Name is lying very tranquilly in a great feather-bed, without knowing anything about the tears he is causing. His eyes are open, but he sees nothing; the objects about him do not reach his soul. Neither does he hear anything except a hollow murmur, a confused humming, as if he had two sea-shells for ears, those big pink-lipped shells in which one can hear the roar of the sea. He does not speak, he does not think: he is like a sick flower. Provided a compress of cool water be held on his head, and a bit of ice put in his mouth, it is all he asks. When the ice is melted, or when the compress has dried with the heat of his brain, he utters a groan: that is all his conversation.

Several days pass thus, days without hours, days of chaos, and then, suddenly, one fine morning, Little What's-His-Name experiences a strange sensation. He feels as if he had been drawn up from the bottom of the sea. His eyes see, his ears hear. He breathes; he begins to revive. The thinking-machine that was slumbering in some corner of his brain, with its wheels fine as fairy hair, wakes and sets itself in motion; slowly at first, then a little more quickly, then with mad swiftness, — tic, tic, tic! — until it seems as if it were going to pieces. It is evident this pretty machine was not made for sleeping, and that it wants to

make up for lost time. Tic, tic, tic! The ideas cross and become entangled like silken threads. "O God! where am I? What is this big bed? And those three ladies over there by the window, what are they doing? Don't I know that little figure in a black gown, with her back turned? I might almost think—"

And in order to get a look at the black figure he thinks he recognizes, Little What 's-His-Name raises himself with difficulty on his elbow, and leans out of bed; then suddenly he throws himself back in terror. There, before him, in the middle of the room, he has seen a walnut wardrobe, with old iron-work ornaments climbing up the front. He knows that wardrobe; he has already seen it in a dream, in a horrible dream. Tic, tic, tic! The thinking-machine goes like the wind. Oh! now Little What 's-His-Name remembers; he sees the Hôtel Pilois again, Jacques' death and burial, his arrival at Pierrotte's in the rain; he recalls everything. Alas! in being born anew to life, the poor boy is born anew to sorrow, and his first word is a groan.

At this groan, the three women, working across the room, by the window, shudder. One of them, the youngest, rises, crying: "Ice, ice!" And she runs quickly to the mantelpiece to get a piece of ice that she brings to Little What 's-His-Name; but Little What 's-His-Name does not want it. Gently he pushes away the hand that seeks his lips; it is a very delicate hand for a nurse to have! At any rate, he says in a trembling voice:

"Good-morning, Camille!"

Camille Pierrotte is so amazed to hear the dying man speak, that she stands stupefied, with her bit of transparent ice shaking on the tips of her fingers that are pink with cold.

"Good-morning, Camille," repeats Little What's-His-Name. "Oh! I know you very well indeed; I have all my wits now. And you? Do you see me? Are you able to see me?"

Camille Pierrotte opens her eyes wide.

"Do I see you, Daniel? Of course I see you!"

Then, at the thought that the wardrobe has lied, that Camille Pierrotte is not blind, and that the dream, the horrible dream will not be true to the end, Little What's-His-Name takes courage, and ventures to ask other questions.

"I have been very ill, haven't I, Camille?"

"Oh, yes! Daniel, very ill."

"Have I been lying here for a long time?"

"It will be three weeks to-morrow."

"Mercy! Three weeks! Already three weeks since poor Jacques —"

He does not finish his sentence, and hides his head in the pillow, sobbing.

At this moment Pierrotte enters the room. bringing with him a new doctor. (If the illness only continue, all the Academy of Medicine will be called in.) This one is the illustrious Doctor *Broum-Broum*, a fellow who goes straight to his business, and does not amuse himself with buttoning his gloves at the bedside of his patients. He approaches Little What's-His-Name, feels his

pulse, looks at his eyes and tongue; then, turning to Pierrotte, says:

"What were you talking about? That boy is well again."

"Well!" exclaims the good Pierrotte clasping his hands.

"So well that I want you to throw all that ice out of the window, and to give your patient a wing of chicken, and let him wash it down with a glass of claret. Come, don't grieve, my little lady; in a week this young scapegrace will be on his feet, I can answer for it. In the meanwhile, keep him quiet in bed; avoid all emotions and shocks, that is the chief point. We may leave the rest to nature: she understands how to take care of him better than you and I."

Speaking thus, the illustrious Doctor ***Broum-Broum*** gives a slap to the young scapegrace, and a smile to Mdlle. Pierrotte, and moves rapidly away, escorted by the good Pierrotte, who is crying with joy and keeps repeating all the time: "Oh, Doctor! if I may be allowed to say so, if I may be allowed to say so —"

After they have gone, Camille wants the patient to go to sleep, but he refuses energetically to do so.

"Don't go away, Camille, please don't. Don't leave me alone. How can you expect me to sleep, with all the trouble I have?"

"Yes, Daniel, you must. You must go to sleep. You need rest; the doctor said so. Come, be sensible, shut your eyes, and try not to think. I

will come back to see you in a little while, and, if you have slept, I will stay a long time with you."

"I will sleep, then, I will sleep," said Little What's-His-Name, shutting his eyes. Then, changing his mind: "One word more, Camille. Whose was that little figure in black, I saw here just now?"

"A figure in black?"

"Yes, you know: that little figure in black who was working over there with you, by the window. Now, she is n't there any more, but I saw her a little while ago, I am sure."

"Oh, no, Daniel, you are mistaken. I was working here all the morning with Mme. Tribou, — your old friend, Mme. Tribou, you know; the lady you used to call the very deserving person. But Mme. Tribou is not in black; she always has on the same green gown. No, indeed, there is not a black gown in the house. You must have dreamed it. Now, I am going away; sleep well."

Thereupon, Camille Pierrotte makes a hasty escape, confused and blushing as if she had been telling a lie.

Little What's-His-Name is left alone, but he does not sleep the better for it. The machine with fine wheels plays the devil in his brain. The silk threads cross and become entangled with one another. He thinks of his dearly beloved who is sleeping under the grass of Montmartre; he thinks of the black eyes, too, those beautiful sombre luminaries that Providence seemed to have kindled expressly for him, and that now —

Here the door of the room opens a little way, softly, very softly, as if some one wanted to come in; but, almost immediately, he hears Camille Pierrotte saying in a low tone:

"Don't go in. The emotion will kill him if he wakes up."

And the door closes softly, very softly, as it opened. Unluckily, a fold of a black gown is caught in the crack, and from his bed, Little What's-His-Name can see this fold hanging through the door.

With this his heart gives a leap, his eyes flame, and raising himself on his elbow, he begins to cry very loud: "Mother! Mother! Why don't you come here and kiss me?"

The door opens at the same moment, and the little black figure, who can stand it no longer, rushes into the room, but, instead of going toward the bed, she goes straight to the other end of the room, with her arms open, crying:

"Daniel! Daniel!"

"This way, mother," cries Little What's-His-Name, stretching out his arms, and laughing: "This way, don't you see me?"

And then Mme. Eyssette, half turned toward the bed, and groping in the air about her with trembling hands, answers in a heart-breaking voice:

"Alas! no, my dearest treasure, I cannot see you. I shall never see you again, I am blind!"

On hearing this, Little What's-His-Name utters a great cry, and falls back on the pillow.

Certainly, after twenty years of misery and misfortune, after the death of her two children, the ruin of her home and her separation from her husband, it is nothing very extraordinary that the divine eyes of Mme. Eyssette should be burnt out with tears as they are. But for Little What's-His Name, what a coincidence with his dream! What a last terrible blow destiny held in reserve for him! Will not he die of this?

No, Little What's-His-Name will not die. He must not die. What would become of his poor blind mother, left alone? Where would she find tears to weep for her third son? What would become of M. Eyssette, that victim of commercial honor, that wandering Jew of the grape industry, who has not even time to come and embrace his sick child, nor to bring a flower to the one who is dead? Who would restore the family fortunes, and rebuild that dear family hearth where the two old people can one day come to warm their poor chilled hands? No, no, Little What's-His-Name does not want to die. On the contrary, he clings to life, and with all his might. They told him that, to get well more quickly, he must not think,— so he does not think; that he must not speak,— so he does not speak; that he must not cry,— so he does not cry; it is a pleasure to see him in his bed, with his eyes open, and a peaceful expression on his face, amusing himself by playing with the tassels of his eider-down coverlet. It is an easy convalescence.

The whole household is silently busied about

him. Mme. Eyssette spends her days at the foot of the bed, with her knitting; the dear blind woman is so used to her long needles that she knits as well as in the time when she had her eyes. The very deserving person is there, too; and Pierrotte's kind face is constantly to be seen at the door. Even the flute-player comes up four or five times a day to ask for news, — only it must be said that he does not come for love of the patient; it is the very deserving person who attracts him. Since Camille Pierrotte formally declared to him that she wanted neither him nor his flute, the fiery performer has fallen back upon the widow Tribou, who, though neither so rich nor so pretty as Pierrotte's daughter, is yet not entirely devoid of charms and savings.

The flute-player has lost no time with this romantic matron; at the third visit, marriage was already in the air, and they talked vaguely of setting up a herb-shop in the Rue des Lombards, with the fruit of the lady's economies. It is in order not to allow these fine projects to slumber, that the young musician comes up so often for news.

And Mdlle. Pierrotte? Nobody speaks of her. Is n't she still in the house? Yes, always; only, since the patient has been out of danger, she has hardly ever entered his room. When she comes, she does so in passing, to get the blind woman and lead her to table; but she never has a word for Little What 's-His-Name. Ah! how far away he is from the time of the red rose, the time when the black eyes opened like two velvet flowers to say:

"I love you." The sick boy sighs in his bed, thinking of these vanished joys. He sees she no longer loves him, that she flies from him, and has a horror of him; but it is his own fault, and he has no right to complain. And yet, it would have been so pleasant, in the midst of so much mourning and sadness, to have a little love to warm his heart! It would have been such a comfort to have a friendly shoulder to cry upon! "After all, the harm is done," thought the poor boy to himself; "let us think no more of it, and a truce to idle dreams. It is no longer a question of my being happy in life; it is a question of doing my duty. To-morrow I shall speak to Pierrotte."

In fact, the next day, at the time when Pierrotte crosses the room on tip-toe, to go down to the shop, Little What's-His-Name, who has been watching for him since dawn from behind the curtains, calls softly: "Monsieur Pierrotte! Monsieur Pierrotte!"

Pierrotte goes up to the bed; and then the sick boy says, with much emotion, and without raising his eyes:

"My dear M. Pierrotte, here I am, on the way to my recovery, and I want to have a serious talk with you. I am not going to thank you for all you are doing for my mother and me——"

Pierrotte cuts me short: "Not a word of that, Monsieur Daniel! What I am doing is merely my duty; it was all settled with M. Jacques."

"Yes, I know, Pierrotte; I know you always

have the same answer to all I want to say to you on this subject, so it is not of this I am going to speak. On the contrary, I have called you, because I want to ask a favor of you. Your clerk is soon to leave you; will you take me in his place? Oh, please, Pierrotte! listen till I come to the end; don't say no, till you have heard me to the end. I know, after my base conduct, I have no longer a right to live with you all. There is some one in this house to whom my presence gives pain, some one to whom the sight of me is odious, and it is only just that it should be so. But, if I arrange never to let her see me, if I promise never to come up here, and always stay in the shop, if I belong to your household without making part of it, like a big dog living in the court-yard and never entering the house, — could not you take me on these conditions?"

Pierrotte feels a desire to take Little What's-His-Name's curly head in his hands and kiss it violently; but he restrains himself, and answers quietly:

"Now, listen, Monsieur Daniel; before saying anything, I must consult my little girl. Your suggestion suits me well enough, but I don't know if the little girl — At all events, we can find out. She must be up. Camille! Camille!"

Camille Pierrotte, matutinal as a bee, is engaged in watering her red rose-bush on the drawing-room mantelpiece. She makes her appearance in a morning-gown, her hair brushed straight back, fresh, gay, and smelling of flowers.

"Come, little girl," said her father, "here is M. Daniel asking if he can take the place of clerk in my shop; only as he thinks his presence here would be too disagreeable to you —"

"Too disagreeable!" interrupted Camille Pierrotte, changing color.

This is all she says, but the black eyes finish her sentence for her. Yes, the black eyes themselves open before Little What's-His-Name, deep as night, and luminous as stars, crying: "Love! Love!" with so much passion and fire that the poor sick boy's heart is kindled.

Then Pierrotte says, laughing in his sleeve:

"You had both better explain yourselves; there is some misunderstanding about it."

And he turns to drum the measure of a dance of the Cévennes, on the window-pane; then, when he thinks the children have explained themselves sufficiently, — O Heavens! they have hardly had time to say two or three words to each other, — he comes back and looks at them.

"Well?" he says.

"Ah, Pierrotte!" says Little What's-His-Name, holding out his hands to him, "she is as kind as you; she has forgiven me!"

From that moment the patient's convalescence advances with seven-leagued boots. I should think so! The black eyes never leave the room. The days are spent in discussing plans for the future. They talk, too, of dear Mother Jacques, and his name still makes them shed many tears. But, all the same, there is love in the house of Pierrotte;

its presence can be felt there. And if anybody is surprised that love can flourish thus in mourning and tears, I will tell him to go to the graveyard and see all the pretty little flowers that grow in the crevices of the tombs.

Besides, you must not think that love makes Little What's-His-Name forget his duty. Happy as he is, lying in his great bed, with his mother and the black eyes so near, he is in haste to be well again, to get up and go down to the shop. It is not certainly because he finds the china so tempting, but he is pining to begin that life of labor and self-devotion of which Mother Jacques set him the example. After all, it is better to sell plates in a shop, as Irma the actress used to say, than to sweep out the Ouly Institute, or to be hissed at Montparnasse. There is no farther talk of the Muse. Daniel Eyssette still loves verses, but not his own; and on the day when the printer, weary of keeping the nine hundred and ninety-nine volumes of the *Pastoral Comedy*, sends them to the Passage du Saumon, the poor ex-poet has the courage to say:

"We must burn all this."

To which Pierrotte, who is more prudent, replies:

"Burn all this! No, indeed, I should rather keep it in the shop; I shall find a way to use it. If I may be allowed to say so, I have very soon to send a case of egg-cups to Madagascar. It seems that in that country, ever since they saw the wife of an English missionary eating boiled eggs in the shell, they are unwilling to eat them in any other way. With your permission, Monsieur

Daniel, your books will serve to wrap the egg-cups in."

And, in fact, two weeks afterwards, the *Pastoral Comedy* sets out on its journey to the country of the illustrious Rana-Volo. May it have more success there than in Paris!

And now, dear reader, before ending this history, I want to introduce you once more to the yellow drawing-room. It is a Sunday afternoon. A fine winter's day, — cold and dry and sunny. All Pierrotte's household is radiant. Little What's-His-Name is quite well again, and has just risen for the first time. In the morning, in honor of this happy event, several dozen oysters, watered with a delicious white wine of Touraine, have been sacrificed to Esculapius. Now, all are gathered together in the drawing-room; it is warm and comfortable; a fire is blazing in the fireplace. The sun traces silver landscapes on the frost-covered panes.

In front of the fire, Little What's-His-Name sits on a stool at the feet of his poor blind mother, who is dozing, and talks in a low voice with Mdlle. Pierrotte, who is redder than the red rose she wears in her hair. That is natural, for she is so near the fire! From time to time there is a sound like the nibbling of a mouse from the bird-headed man who is pecking at sugar in the corner; or, again, a cry of distress from the very deserving person who is losing at bézique the money destined for the herb-shop. I beg you to observe the triumphant air of Mme. Lalouette who is winning, and the anxious smile of the flute-player, who is losing.

And M. Pierrotte? Oh! M. Pierrotte is not far distant; he is there in the recess of the window, half hidden by the long yellow curtain, entirely absorbed in a silent task over which he is perspiring. Before him on a small round table, there are compasses, pencils, rulers, squares, india ink and brushes, and also a long piece of drawing-paper, that he is covering with strange signs. His work seems to please him; every five minutes he lifts his head, holds it a little on one side and smiles complacently at the daub he is making.

What is this mysterious work of his?

Wait a minute, we shall soon know. Pierrotte has finished; he leaves his hiding-place, comes softly up behind Camille and Little What 's-His-Name, then suddenly spreads out his large piece of paper in front of their eyes, saying: "There, young lovers, what do you think of this?"

There are two exclamations in reply:

"Oh, papa!"

"Oh, Monsieur Pierrotte!"

"What is it? What is it?" asks the poor blind woman, waking with a start.

Pierrotte says joyously:

"What is it, Madame Eyssette? It is, if I may be allowed to say so, the draft for a new sign that we are to put up in front of the shop in a few months. Now, Monsieur Daniel, read it aloud to us so that we may judge of the effect."

In the bottom of his heart, Little What 's-His-Name sheds a last tear for his blue butterflies; and, taking the paper in both hands — Come, be

a man, Little What's-His-Name!— he reads aloud in a steady voice the sign for the shop, in which his future is written in letters a foot long:

CHINA AND GLASS.

EYSSETTE AND PIERROTTE.

SUCCESSORS TO LALOUETTE.

THE BELLE-NIVERNAISE.

THE BELLE-NIVERNAISE.

CHAPTER I.

A RASH ACTION.

THE street of the Enfants-Rouges, in the Temple quarter.

A street narrow as a sewer, stagnant gutters, puddles of black mud, musty odors, and dirty water issuing from gaping alleys.

On both sides, very high houses, with barrack-like windows, and cloudy, curtainless panes; dwellings for day-laborers and men who take in their work at home, tenements for masons, and furnished lodgings let by the night.

On the ground floor, there are shops. Many dealers in pork and wine; chestnut-vendors, bakeries of coarse bread; a butcher's shop full of purple and yellow meat.

No carriages in the street, no furbelows nor loungers on the pavement; only costermongers hawking the refuse of the markets, and a bustling crowd of workingmen coming out of the factories, carrying their blouses rolled up under their arms.

It is the eighth of the month, the day when the poor pay their rent, and the landlords, weary of waiting, turn poverty out of doors.

It is the day that you see household goods moved in carts; iron bedsteads and rickety tables, their legs in the air, piled up together with torn mattresses and kitchen utensils.

And not even a bundle of straw in which to pack all this poor, mutilated, wretched furniture, worn out with tumbling down filthy staircases, and rolling from garret to cellar.

Night is falling.

One by one, the gas-jets are lighted, and are reflected in the gutters and shop-windows.

The fog is cold.

The passers-by are hastening on.

Leaning against the counter of a wine-merchant, in a comfortable, well-warmed saloon, Father Louveau is drinking with a joiner from La Villette.

His large honest sailor's face, all red and seamed, brightens with a broad smile that sets his earrings shaking.

"It is a bargain then, Father Dubac; you buy my load of wood at the price I have mentioned."

"Agreed."

"To your health!"

"To yours!"

They clink glasses, and Father Louveau drinks, his head thrown back, his eyes half-closed, smacking his lips, to get the flavor of the white wine.

What fault can you find? Nobody is perfect, and Father Louveau's weakness is white wine. Not

that he is a drunkard.—Heavens, no!—His wife, who is a woman of sense, would not tolerate drunkenness; but when a man lives like a sailor, with his feet in the water and his head in the sunshine, he must take a glass occasionally.

And Father Louveau, growing more and more cheerful, smiles at the zinc counter which he sees through a mist, and which makes him think of the pile of coin he will pocket to-morrow, upon delivering his wood.

One last shake of the hand, one last glass, and they separate.

"To-morrow, without fail?"

"You may depend upon me." Father Louveau will certainly not miss the appointment. He has made too good a bargain, and it has been too briskly concluded for him to let it drag now.

The jolly sailor goes off toward the Seine, swaggering along, jostling against the couples in the street, with the overflowing joy of a schoolboy who is carrying home good marks in his pocket.

What will Mother Louveau, the woman of sense, say when she hears her husband has sold his load of wood at once, and that he has made a good bargain?

One or two more bargains like this and they will be able to buy a new boat and leave the *Belle Nivernaise*, that is beginning to leak too much.

This is no reproach to her, for she was a fine boat in her youth, only, you see, everything decays and grows old, and Father Louveau, himself, is conscious of not being so nimble as in the time

when he was the youngest hand on the floats of the Marne.

But what is happening over there?

Some women are gathering in front of a doorway; people are stopping and talking, and the policeman, who stands in the midst of the group, is writing in his note-book.

The sailor crosses the street out of curiosity, to do like everybody else.

"What is the matter?"

Probably a dog has been crushed, two carriages have run into each other, or a drunken man has fallen in the gutter; nothing interesting.

No; it is a little boy, seated on a wooden chair; his hair is dishevelled, his cheeks are daubed with jam, and he is rubbing his eyes with his fists.

He is crying.

The tears running down have traced strange patterns on his poor little dirty face.

Imperturbable and dignified, as if he were interrogating a prisoner, the officer questions the child and takes notes.

"What is your name?"

"Totor."

"Victor what?"

No answer.

The boy cries louder and calls:

"Mamma! Mamma!"

Then a woman who was passing, a woman of the people, very ugly, and very dirty, dragging two children after her stepped from the group and said to the policeman:

"Let me try."

She knelt, wiped the child's nose, dried his eyes, and kissed his sticky cheeks.

"What is your mamma's name, darling?"

He could not tell.

The policeman turned to the neighbors.

"Come, you are the porter, and ought to know those people."

Nobody had ever known their name.

So many lodgers came to the house!

All that could be found out was that they had been living there a month, that they had never paid a penny, that the landlord had just turned them out, and it was a good riddance.

"What did they do?"

"Nothing at all."

The father and mother spent the days in drinking, and the evenings in fighting.

They never agreed, except as to beating their children, two boys who begged in the streets and stole from the stalls.

A pretty family, as you see.

"Do you think they will come to look for the child."

"Certainly not."

They had taken advantage of their moving, to lose him. It was not the first time such a thing had happened on pay-day.

Then the policeman asked:

"Did nobody see his parents go?"

They had left in the morning, the husband pushing the cart, the woman carrying a bundle in her

apron, and the two boys with their hands in their pockets.

Now, try to catch them.

The people in the street exclaimed indignantly, then went on their way.

The poor little brat had been there since noon.

His mother had put him on a chair and said to him:

"Be a good boy."

He had been waiting since then.

When he cried with hunger, the woman who sold fruit opposite gave him a jam tart.

But the tart had long been finished, and the child had begun to cry again.

The unhappy little creature was dying with fear. Fear of the dogs prowling about him; fear of the night coming on; fear of the strangers who spoke to him; and his little heart was beating wildly in his breast, like that of a dying bird.

The crowd about him increased, and the impatient policeman took him by the hand to lead him to the police-station.

"Come, does nobody claim him?"

"Wait a minute!"

Everybody turned, and saw a big, kind, red face, smiling foolishly to the ears, that were pierced with copper rings.

"Wait a minute! If nobody wants him, I'll take him."

The crowd burst into exclamations:

"How lucky!"

"You are doing a kind thing."

"You are a good fellow!"

Father Louveau, much excited by the white wine, the success of his bargain, and the general approbation, stationed himself in the midst of the circle with his arms folded.

"Well, what is it? Nothing but a matter of course."

Then the curious spectators accompanied him to the commissary of the police, without allowing his enthusiasm to cool.

There, according to the custom in similar cases, he was obliged to undergo an examination.

"What is your name?"

"François Louveau, sir, a married man, and well married, I venture to say, to a woman of sense. And that is good luck for me, sir, because I am not very clever, not very clever, ha! ha! you see. I am not brilliant. 'François is not brilliant,' as my wife says."

He had never been so eloquent before.

He felt his tongue loosened, and the assurance of a man who has just made a good bargain, and drunk a bottle of white wine.

"What is your business?"

"I am a sailor, sir, owner of the *Belle-Nivernaise*, a fine boat, furnished with a pretty crew. Oh! my crew is a famous one. Ask the lock-keepers between the bridge Marie and Clamecy. Do you know Clamecy, sir?"

The people about him were smiling, and Father Louveau continued, spluttering and swallowing his syllables.

"Clamecy is a lovely place, I can tell you. Wooded from top to bottom, and the wood is good and serviceable; all the carpenters know that. It is there I buy the wood I cut. Ha! ha! I am celebrated for cutting. I have a good eye. I don't mean that I am clever; I am certainly not brilliant, as my wife says; but at any rate, I have a good eye. So, look here, I take a tree, as big as you, begging your pardon, sir, and I put a rope round it, like this—"

He had taken hold of the policeman, and was winding him up in some twine he had pulled from his pocket.

The policeman struggled.

"Let me alone."

"Yes, yes; this is only to show the commissary. I wind it up like this, and then when I have measured it, I multiply, multiply—I can't remember what I multiply by. My wife knows arithmetic. My wife is a woman of sense."

The gallery was immensely amused, and the commissary himself condescended to smile behind his table.

When the mirth had somewhat subsided, he asked:

"What shall you do with that child?"

"I shan't make him a gentleman, that's sure. There has never been a man of property in the family. But a sailor, a good sailor's boy, like the others."

"Have you children?"

"Have I, indeed? One that can walk, one at

the breast, and one on the way. That is n't bad, is it, for a man who is not brilliant? With this one too, it will make four, but then, when there is enough for three, there is enough for four. You crowd up a little; you draw your belt tighter, or you try to sell your wood a little dearer."

His earrings were shaking, stirred by his hearty laugh, while he looked complacently from one to the other of the spectators.

A big book was shoved before him.

As he did not know how to write, he made a cross at the foot of the page.

Then the commissary intrusted the waif to his care.

"Take the boy, François Louveau, and bring him up well. If I learn anything in regard to him, I shall keep you informed. But it is not probable that his parents will ever claim him. As to you, you seem to be an honest man and I have confidence in you. Always obey your wife. Now good-bye, and don't drink too much white wine."

A dark night, a cold fog, and a crowd of indifferent people hastening homewards, are all adapted to sober a poor man very quickly.

The sailor was hardly in the street, alone with the stamped paper in his pocket and his charge by the hand, when he felt his enthusiasm suddenly vanish, and the enormity of his deed became apparent to him.

He would be always the same then? A fool? A braggart?

He could never go his way like others, without attending to what did not concern him?

He could already see Mother Louveau's anger.

What a reception, dear friends, what a reception!

It is terrible for a man who wears his heart on his sleeve to have a woman of sense for his wife. He could never dare go home. Neither did he dare return to the commissary.

What should he do, what should he do?

They walked on through the fog.

Louveau gesticulated, talked to himself, and prepared a speech.

Victor dragged his shoes in the mud.

He had to be pulled along, like a dead weight.

He could go no farther.

Then Father Louveau stopped, and taking him in his arms, wrapped him in his blouse.

The tight clasp of the small arms gave him back a little courage.

He resumed his way.

Dear me, so much the worse!

He meant to take the risk.

If Mother Louveau shut the door in their faces, there would still be time to carry back the child to the police; but perhaps she would keep him for a night, and there would always be a good dinner gained.

They reached the bridge of Austerlitz, where the *Belle-Nivernaise* was moored.

The sweet insipid odor of the cargoes of fresh wood filled the night.

A whole flotilla of boats stirred in the shadow of the river.

The movement of the floating craft made the lanterns waver and the interlacing chains clash.

To go on board his boat, Father Louveau was obliged to cross two barges connected by foot-bridges.

He advanced with timid steps and trembling legs, encumbered by the child, who was half strangling him.

How black the night was!

One little lamp alone made the cabin window shine like a star, and a luminous ray, glimmering under the door, lent animation to the sleep of the *Belle-Nivernaise.*

The voice of Mother Louveau could be heard, scolding the children as she attended to the cooking.

"Will you stop that, Clara?"

There was no more time for retreat.

The sailor opened the door.

Mother Louveau's back was turned to him as she bent over the saucepan, but she had recognized his step, and said without disturbing herself:

"Is it you, François? How late you are!"

The fried potatoes were leaping and crackling in the pan, and the vapor spread from them to the open door and clouded the cabin windows.

Francois had put the child on the ground, and the poor little creature, penetrated by the warmth of the room, felt his small red fingers unstiffen.

He smiled, and said in a flute-like voice:

"It is warm here."

Mother Louveau turned.

Pointing to the ragged child standing in the middle of the room, she cried in an angry tone:

"What is that?"

Ah, there are such minutes as this in the best households!

"A surprise, ha, ha! a surprise!" The sailor laughed from ear to ear, to put a bold front on the matter; but he would have much rather been still in the street.

And as his wife waited for an explanation with a terrible expression of countenance, he stammered out the story quite crookedly, with the beseeching eyes of a dog threatened with the whip.

The child's parents had abandoned it, and he had found it crying on the pavement.

The question was asked:

"Who wants it?"

He had answered:

"I."

And the commissary had said to him:

"Take it."

"It is true, is n't it, little one?"

Then Mother Louveau burst out:

"You are crazy, or you have drunk too much! Has anybody ever heard of such idiocy? Then you must want to make us die in poverty? Do you think we have too much money as it is? Have we too much bread to eat? Too much room to sleep in?"

François stared at his shoes in silence.

"But look at yourself, you wretch, and look at us! Your boat has as many holes as my sieve. And you must go and amuse yourself by picking up other people's children in the gutters!"

The poor man had already said all this to himself.

He had no thought of protesting.

He hung his head like a prisoner listening to the charge against him.

"You will have the kindness to carry back that child to the commissary of the police. If he makes any difficulty about taking him, you may say your wife won't have him. Do you understand?"

She advanced toward him, saucepan in hand, with a menacing gesture.

The sailor promised all she wanted.

"Come, don't be angry. I thought I was doing right. That's enough. Must I carry him back at once?"

Mother Louveau was appeased by her husband's submission. Perhaps, too, she had a vision of one of her own children lost, and alone in the night, holding out a hand to the passers-by.

She turned aside to put the saucepan on the fire, and said in a gruff tone:

"It is not possible this evening; the police station is closed. And now that you have taken him, you can't put him back on the pavement. We will keep him to-night; but to-morrow morning—"

And Mother Louveau was so indignant that she poked the fire with all her might.

"But to-morrow morning I swear that you shall rid me of him!"

There was silence.

Mother Louveau set the table roughly, hitting the glasses, and throwing down the forks.

Clara was frightened, and kept quiet in a corner.

The baby wailed on the bed, and the little waif watched the coals brighten with admiration.

Perhaps he had never seen a fire since he was born.

It was a joy, too, for him to find himself at table, a napkin at his neck, and a heap of potatoes on his plate.

He swallowed like a robin redbreast that is given bread-crumbs on a snowy day.

Mother Louveau helped him peevishly, a little touched in reality by the thin child's appetite.

Little Clara, enchanted, patted him with her spoon.

Louveau, dismayed, dared not lift his eyes.

When the table was cleared, and her children put to bed, Mother Louveau sat by the fire, with the boy between her knees, to clean him a little.

"He cannot go to bed, dirty as he is. I bet he has never seen a sponge or a comb."

The child spun round like a top in her hands.

Indeed, once washed and combed, the poor little brat was not so ugly, with his pink poodle's nose and his hands round as lady-apples.

Mother Louveau looked at her handiwork with a shade of satisfaction.

"How old may he be?"

François laid down his pipe, delighted to appear again upon the scene.

It was the first time his wife had spoken to him during the evening, and a question was almost equal to a return to favor.

He rose and drew some bits of twine from his pocket.

"How old? Ha! ha! I can tell you."

He seized the child by the waist, and wound him about with his twine like the trees of Clamecy.

Mother Louveau stared at him in bewilderment.

"What are you doing?"

"I am taking his measure, of course."

She snatched the twine from his hands, and threw it across the room.

"Poor fellow, how silly you are with your manias! A child is n't a young tree."

No luck this evening for the unfortunate François.

He beats a retreat, quite abashed, while Mother Louveau puts the child to bed in Clara's cradle.

The little girl is sleeping soundly, filling up all the space.

She feels vaguely that something is being slipped in beside her, stretches out her arms, crowds her little neighbor into a corner, sticks her elbows into his eyes, and then turns over and goes to sleep again.

Now the lamp is blown out.

The Seine, rippling about the boat, rocks the plank house gently.

The little waif feels a pleasant warmth steal over him, and goes to sleep with the unknown sensation of something like a caressing hand passed over his head when his eyes closed.

CHAPTER II.

THE BELLE-NIVERNAISE.

MISS CLARA always woke up early. She was much amazed, that morning, not to see her mother in the cabin, and to find another head beside her on the pillow.

She rubbed her eyes with her little fists, and, taking her bedfellow by the hair, shook him.

Poor Totor woke in the midst of the oddest torments, teased by mischievous fingers that tickled his neck and seized him by the nose.

He looked about him in surprise, and was quite astonished to see that his dream still lasted.

Above them, steps were creaking. The timber was being unloaded upon the quay with a hollow noise.

Miss Clara seemed much puzzled.

She lifted her little finger in the air and pointed out the ceiling to her companion with a gesture that meant:

"What is that?"

It was the cargo that they were beginning to unload. Dubac, the carpenter from La Villette, had arrived at six o'clock with his horse and cart, and Father Louveau had set to work, with an enthusiasm that was strange to him.

The good man had not closed his eyes all night, thinking that he should be forced to carry back the cold and hungry child to the commissary.

He expected another scene in the morning, but Mother Louveau was busied with other thoughts, for she did not mention Victor to him.

François believed he had gained a great deal by postponing the hour of explanation.

His sole idea was to escape his wife's eye, and make her forget him, working with all his might, lest Mother Louveau should see him idle and call to him:

"Look here, now that you are doing nothing, carry back the boy where you took him from."

So he worked.

The pile of timber diminished visibly.

Dubac had already made three journeys, and Mother Louveau, standing on the foot-bridge, her baby in her arms, had just time to count the logs as they passed.

In his zeal, François chose planks as long as masts and as thick as walls.

When the log was too heavy, he called the Crew to help him lift it.

The Crew was a sailor with a wooden leg, who alone made up the sum of persons employed on the *Belle-Nivernaise.*

They had taken him in out of charity, and kept him out of habit.

The cripple propped himself on his wooden leg, and raised a beam with great effort, while Louveau, bending under the weight, his belt drawn tight

round his waist, slowly descended the hanging ladder.

How was it possible to disturb a man who was so busy?

It did not occur to Mother Louveau to do so.

She went to and fro on the foot-bridge, absorbed in nursing Mimile.

Mimile was always thirsty, like his father!

Was he thirsty, Louveau? Not to-day, that's certain.

Since he began to work in the morning, there has been as yet no question of white wine. He has not as yet taken the time to breathe, mop his forehead, and clink glasses at the corner of a counter.

Just now, even, when Dubac invited him to go and get a drink, François answered heroically:

"We shall have time for it later."

Refuse a glass!

His wife cannot understand it at all; her Louveau has been changed.

Clara is changed too, for it is after eleven o'clock, and the little girl, who never likes staying in bed, has not stirred all the morning.

And Mother Louveau goes down with all speed to see what is happening in the cabin.

François remains on deck, letting his arms hang loose, suffocated as if a log had been jammed into his stomach.

It has come this time!

His wife has remembered Victor; she will bring him up with her, and he will have to start out with him for the police station.

No; Mother Louveau reappears alone, laughing and beckoning to him.

"Come and see; it is too amusing!"

The good man cannot understand her sudden mirth, and follows her like an automaton, his legs stiffened with emotion.

The two children were seated on the edge of the bed, in their nightgowns, barefooted.

They had taken possession of the bowl of soup that Clara's mother had left, when she got up, within reach of the small arms.

Having but one spoon for two mouths, they crammed it in alternately, like little birds in a nest, and Clara, who always made a fuss about eating her soup, stretched out her mouth toward the spoon laughing.

Of course they had put bread-crumbs in each other's ears and eyes, but they had neither broken nor upset anything, and the two babies were enjoying themselves so heartily that it was impossible to remain in a bad temper.

Mother Louveau kept on laughing.

"Since they agree so well together, we need not pay attention to them."

François hastened back to his work, enchanted with the turn things were taking.

Ordinarily, on the days they unloaded the timber, he took a rest in the course of the day; that is to say, he wandered through all the sailors' public-houses, from the Point-du-Jour to the Quay of Bercy.

So the unloading dragged through a whole

week, and Mother Louveau was always in a bad humour.

But this time there was no white wine, no laziness; instead, a zeal for doing well, and feverish, unremitting toil.

The little boy, on his part, as if he understood that he had to gain his cause, did all he could to amuse Clara.

For the first time in her life, the little girl passed the day without crying, without bumping herself or making holes in her stockings.

Her companion amused her, and wiped her nose for her.

He was always disposed to sacrifice his hair to stop Clara's tears on her eyelashes, before they fell.

And she pulled his tangled mane with both hands, teasing her big comrade like a pug nipping a poodle.

Mother Louveau watched all this from a distance.

She said to herself that this little child-nurse was certainly a convenience, and that they might keep Victor till they had finished unloading the timber. There would be time to carry him back, just as they were about to start.

This was why, in the evening, she made no allusion to sending away the child, but gorged him with potatoes and put him to bed as she had done the night before.

It looked as if François' charge made part of the family, and to see Clara clasping his neck as she went to sleep, it was evident the little girl had taken him under her protection.

The unloading of the *Belle-Nivernaise* lasted three days.

Three days of hard labor, without distraction or intermission.

Toward noon the last cart was loaded, and the boat emptied.

They could not take the tug till the next day, and François spent the time, between-decks, repairing the planking, pursued by the phrase, which for three days had been buzzing in his ears:

"Carry him back to the commissary."

Ah, that commissary!

He was no less feared in the cabin of the *Belle-Nivernaise* than in the house of Guignol.

He had become a sort of bugbear that Mother Louveau made use of to silence Clara.

Every time she pronounced the dreaded name, the little boy fixed upon her eyes that were those of an anxious child who has suffered too young.

He understood vaguely all the dangers to come that were contained in the word.

The commissary! It meant: no more Clara, no more caresses, no more fire, no more potatoes, but a return to his dreary life, to his days without bread, his nights without a bed, his awakenings without kisses.

So it was that he clung to Mother Louveau's petticoats, the evening before the day of departure, when François asked in a trembling voice:

"Come, shall we give him back or not?"

Mother Louveau did not answer.

It was as if she were seeking an excuse to keep Victor.

As for Clara, she was rolling on the floor, choking with tears; having made up her mind to go into convulsions if they separated her from her friend.

The woman of sense spoke gravely:

"My poor husband, you have done a very foolish thing, — as usual. Now we must pay for it. The child has become attached to us, Clara is crazy about him, and we should all be sorry to see him go. I will try to keep him, but I want everybody to do his share. The first time Clara has a tantrum or you are tipsy, I shall carry him back to the commissary."

Father Louveau was radiant.

It was decided. He would drink no more.

He laughed from ear to ear and sang upon deck, as he unrolled the cable, while the tug dragged the *Belle-Nivernaise*, together with a whole flotilla of small craft.

CHAPTER III.

THE VOYAGE.

VICTOR was off.

Off to the country of the suburbs, where the houses and vegetable-gardens are reflected in the water.

Off to the white land of chalk-hills.

Off, past the paved and noisy tow-paths.

Off to the little hill, and the canal of Yonne sleeping in its bed of locks.

Off toward the winter pastures and the woods of Morvan!

Leaning against the helm of his boat, and stubborn in his resolution not to drink, François turned a deaf ear to the invitations of the lock-keepers and the wine-sellers, who were amazed to see him giving them such a wide berth.

He had to hold tight to the helm to prevent the *Belle-Nivernaise* from bringing up alongside the public-houses.

Ever since the old boat had been making the same voyage, she knew the stations and stopped of her own accord, like an omnibus horse.

In the bow, perched upon his single leg, the Crew mournfully manipulated his immense boat-

hook, pushing back the weeds, doubling the bends and grappling the locks.

He did no vast deal of work, although the clatter of his wooden leg could be heard day and night on the deck.

Mute and resigned, he was one of those who have had nothing but ill-luck in life.

One of his eyes had been put out by a comrade at school; he had been crippled by an axe at the saw-yard and scalded by a vat at the sugar-refinery.

He would have become a beggar, dying of hunger at the side of a ditch, if Louveau — who always had sharp eyes — had not engaged him as he was leaving the hospital, to help in running the boat.

It had even once been the occasion of a severe quarrel, — exactly like the one over Victor.

The woman of sense had been angry.

Louveau had kept quiet.

And the Crew had ended by staying.

Now, he made part of the menagerie of the *Belle-Nivernaise*, by the same title as the cat and the crow.

Father Louveau steered so straight, and the Crew was so successful in managing the boat-hook that, twelve days after leaving Paris, the *Belle-Nivernaise*, having ascended the river and the canals, came to be moored at the bridge of Corbigny, to sleep out her winter sleep in peace.

From December to the end of February sailors do not navigate.

They repair their boats and wander through

the forests to buy the timber standing, that they mean to cut in the spring.

As wood is not dear, they burn a bright fire in their cabins, and if the autumn sale has been a good one, the dead season is a time of joyful repose.

They made the *Belle Nivernaise* ready for the winter-time; that is to say, they unhooked the rudder, and hid the jury-mast between-decks, so that all the space was left free for playing and running about.

What a change of life for the little waif!

During the voyage, he had been dazed and scared all the time.

He was like a bird that has been brought up in a cage, and, amazed to find itself free, forgets for the time its song and its wings.

Too young to be charmed by the landscape spread out before his eyes, he had nevertheless been conscious of the majestic ascent of the river, between two vanishing horizons.

Mother Louveau, seeing him shy and silent, kept repeating from morning till night:

"He is deaf and dumb."

No, the little Parisian from the Faubourg du Temple was not dumb!

When he understood thoroughly that he was not dreaming, that he should not return to his garret, and that, in spite of Mother Louveau's threats, there was not much to fear from the commissary, his tongue became loosened.

It was the blooming of a flower brought from

the cellar where it has grown, into the light of a window.

He stopped skulking in corners with the wildness of a hunted ferret.

The deep-set eyes under the projecting forehead lost their restless movement, and, though he remained pale and pensive in appearance, he learned to laugh with Clara.

The little girl loved her companion passionately, as children love at her age, for the pleasure of quarrelling and making friends again.

Though obstinate as a little donkey, she had a very tender heart, and it was enough to mention the commissary to make her obey.

They had hardly reached Corbigny when a new sister came into the world.

Mimile was just eighteen months, so this made many cradles in the cabin, and much work also; for, with all the expenses they had, it was not possible to pay for a servant.

Mother Louveau grumbled so that the Crew's wooden leg shook under him.

No one in the neighborhood pitied them. The peasants, even, made no ceremony of telling what they thought to the curé, who held up the sailor as an example to them.

"You may say what you choose, sir, but there is no sense in a man's picking up other people's children when he has three of his own. But the Louveaus have always been like that. They are possessed by vainglory, and all the advice that can be given them will not change them."

There was no ill-will felt toward them, but nobody would have been sorry to see them receive a lesson.

The curé was a good man who bore no malice; he easily adopted the opinions of others, and ended by recalling a passage from the Gospel or from the Fathers, to reassure himself about his changes of mind.

"My parishioners are right," thought he, rubbing his ill-shaven chin with his hand. "No one must tempt divine Providence."

But, as the Louveaus were good people on the whole, he made his pastoral call upon them as usual.

He found the mother cutting trousers for Victor out of an old blouse, for the little brat had arrived without luggage, and the housewife could not endure rags about her.

She gave a seat to the curé, and as he spoke to her of Victor, insinuating that perhaps, with the Bishop's patronage, they might put him in the orphan asylum of Autun, Mother Louveau, who was always frank with everybody, answered abruptly:

"It is sure, sir, that the child is a burden to us, and it is my opinion that when François brought him, he gave another proof of not being brilliant. My heart is no harder than his; if I had met Victor, I should have felt sorry, but I should have left him where he was. But now that we have taken him, we don't mean to get rid of him, and if we ever fall into trouble on his account, we shall not go to beg of anybody."

At this moment, Victor entered the cabin, carrying Mimile in his arms.

The baby, furious at being weaned, revenged himself by refusing to put his feet to the ground.

He used his teeth, and bit everybody.

Touched by this sight, the curé laid his hand on the waif's head and said solemnly:

"God blesses large families."

He left, enchanted to have remembered a phrase so suited to the occasion.

Mother Louveau had spoken the truth when she said that Victor now belonged to the family.

Though she grumbled and always talked of taking back the child to the commissary, the woman of sense had become attached to the poor pale boy who never let go her skirts.

When Louveau thought there was too much made of him, she invariably answered:

"You ought not to have taken him."

As soon as he was seven, she sent him to school with Clara.

It was always Victor who carried the basket and the books.

He fought valiantly to defend the lunch against the unscrupulous appetite of the children of Morvan.

He had no less heart for study than for fighting, and, although he went to school only in winter, when they were not moving, he knew more, upon his return, than the little peasant children, heavy and noisy as their own sabots, who yawned twelve consecutive months over their ABC.

Victor and Clara came home from school through the forest.

The two children amused themselves watching the woodcutters dig round the trees.

As Victor was light and agile, they made him climb up to the top of the pines to tie the rope which was to pull them down. He looked smaller in proportion as he mounted, and when he reached the top, Clara was very much alarmed.

He was brave, and swung to and fro, expressly to frighten her.

At other times, they went to see M. Maugendre at his chopping-block.

This was a carpenter, a man thin and spare as a lath.

He lived alone, outside the village, in the midst of the forest.

He was supposed to have no friends. The curiosity of the village had been long perplexed by the solitude and silence of the stranger who had come from the heart of the Nièvre to set up his block apart from the others.

For six years he had worked in all weathers, without giving himself a holiday, like a condemned man, although he was known to have much property, made good bargains, and went often to consult a notary upon investing his savings.

One day he had told the curé he was a widower.

Nothing more was known of him.

When Maugendre saw the children, he would put down his saw, and leave his work, in order to talk with them.

He took a liking to Victor, and taught him to whittle the hulls of boats out of chips of wood.

Once he said to him:

"You remind me of a child I lost."

And as if he feared he had told too much, he added: "Oh, it was long, long ago!"

Another time he said to Father Louveau:

"When you are tired of Victor, give him to me. I have no heirs, I will make sacrifices, and send him to school in town. He will pass the examinations and enter the school of Forestry."

But François still felt the glow of his good deed. He refused, and Maugendre waited patiently till the progressive increase of the Louveau family or some money-trouble should disgust the sailor with having adopted the child.

It seemed as if chance would fulfil his wishes.

In short, one might have believed that bad luck had embarked on the *Belle Nivernaise* at the same time with Victor.

From that moment everything went amiss.

The wood did not sell well.

The Crew constantly broke some limb the day before the unloading of the cargo.

At last, one fine day, just as they were to set out for Paris, Mother Louveau fell ill.

François lost his head in the midst of the children's shrieks.

He mixed up the medicines and the soup.

He made the sick woman so impatient by his stupidity that he gave up taking care of her, and left Victor in charge.

For the first time in his life, the sailor bought his wood himself.

In vain he wound his rope round the trees, and took the same measure thirty-six times, one after the other, he always made a mistake in the calculation, — you know, the famous calculation:

" I multiply and multiply — "

It was Mother Louveau who understood that.

He made mistakes in executing his order, started for Paris in great anxiety, and fell in with a dishonest customer, who profited by the circumstances to cheat him.

He returned to the boat with a very heavy heart, sat down at the foot of the bed, and said in a disconsolate voice:

" My poor wife, try to get well, or we shall be ruined."

Mother Louveau recovered slowly. She struggled against their ill-fortune and did wonders to make both ends meet.

If they had had the means to buy a new boat, they might have set up their business again, but they had spent all their savings in the days of sickness, and their profits went in stopping the holes of the *Belle Nivernaise*, that was completely worn out.

Victor became a heavy burden to them.

He was no longer the child of four that they dressed in a blouse and fed without extra expense.

He was twelve, now, and ate like a man, although he had remained thin and nervous, and could not as yet be trusted to handle the boat-hook, — when the Crew broke some part of himself.

Everything was going from bad to worse. They had had great difficulty on their last voyage in ascending the Seine as far as Clamecy.

The *Belle Nivernaise* leaked all over; the temporary mending did no good; they ought to have had the whole hull repaired or rather have put the boat aside and replaced it.

Once in March, the evening before the day they were to make ready for Paris, as Louveau, quite careworn, was taking leave of Maugendre, after paying his bill for wood, the carpenter invited him to come and have a drink with him at his house.

"I have something to say to you, François."

They entered the cabin.

Maugendre filled two glasses, and they sat down to table, one opposite the other.

"I have not always been alone in the world as you see me now. I remember the time when I had all a man needs to be happy; a little property and a wife who loved me. I have lost all. Through my own fault."

The carpenter interrupted himself; the confession sticking in his throat choked him.

"I have never been a bad man, François. But I had one vice — "

"What, you?"

"I have it still. I love money above everything. That is what caused my misfortunes."

"How was that, poor Maugendre?"

"I will tell you. Soon after we were married, when our child was born, the idea came to me of sending my wife to Paris, to find a place as

nurse. That brings in a great deal, when the husband is an orderly man and knows how to do his own housekeeping. My wife did not want to separate herself from her baby. She said to me: 'We are really making enough money as it is. The other money would be ill come by. It would be of no profit to us. Leave such resources to poor families already over-burdened with children, and spare me the sorrow of leaving you.'"

"I would not listen to her, Louveau, and I forced her to go."

"Well?"

"Well, when my wife found a place she gave her child to an old woman to take it back to her country again. She went with them to the railway-station. Nothing was ever heard of them after that."

"And your wife, poor Maugendre?"

"When she heard the news, it made her milk turn. She died."

They were both silent, Louveau moved by what he had just heard, and Maugendre overcome by his recollections.

It was the carpenter who spoke first:

"To punish myself, I condemned myself to the existence I now lead. I have lived for twelve years apart from all. I can stand it no longer. I am afraid of dying alone. If you pity me, you will give me Victor, to take the place of the child I lost."

Louveau was much embarrassed.

Victor was a great expense to them. But if

they let him go now, at the time he was soon to be able to make himself useful, all the sacrifices they had made in bringing him up would be thrown away.

Maugendre guessed what he was thinking of.

"Of course, François, if you give him to me, I will repay you what you have spent for him.

"It will be a good thing, too, for the boy. I can never see boys from the School of Forestry in the woods without thinking: 'I might have made my boy into a young gentleman like these!' Victor is industrious, and I like him. You know very well that I shall treat him like my own son. Come, is it agreed?"

This was discussed in the cabin of the *Belle-Nivernaise*, after the children had gone to bed.

The woman of sense tried to argue.

"You see, François, we have done all we could for that child. God knows we should like to keep him!

"But, since an opportunity is offered us of parting from him without making him unhappy, we must try to be brave."

Involuntarily, their eyes turned toward the bed, where Victor and Mimile were sleeping the calm and untroubled sleep of childhood.

"Poor little boy!" said François in a low voice.

They heard the river rippling along against the sides of the boat, and from time to time, the whistle of the train rending the night.

Mother Louveau burst into sobs: "God have mercy upon us, François; I will keep him."

CHAPTER IV.

LIFE IS HARD.

VICTOR was about fifteen.

The little pale boy had suddenly become a strong fellow, with broad shoulders and quiet manners.

He had been travelling so long on the *Belle-Nivernaise* that he began to know the way like an old sailor, naming the shallows, sniffing out the deep places, and passing from the handling of the boat-hook to that of the rudder.

He wore a red sash and his blouse hanging loose round the waist.

When Father Louveau let him take the tiller, Clara, who was growing a big girl, came to knit beside him, charmed with his calm face and vigorous movements.

This time, the journey from Corbigny to Paris had been a hard one.

Swollen by the autumnal rains, the Seine had broken its barriers, and rushed toward the sea like an escaped wild beast.

The anxious sailors were hastening the unlading of their cargoes, for the stream was already flowing on a level with the quays, and the despatches, sent every hour by the lock-keepers' messengers, brought bad news.

It was said that the tributaries were bursting the dikes, and overflowing the country, and the river was rising, rising.

The wharves were overrun by a busy throng, a swarm of men, carts and horses; above, the steam-cranes were brandishing their great arms.

The wine-market was already cleared.

The cases of sugar were being carried away in trucks.

The tugs left their moorings; the wharves were emptied; and the file of carts, mounting the slope of the embankment, fled from the flood like an army on the march.

The Louveaus, who had been delayed by the roughness of the waters, and the intermission of work caused by moonless nights, despaired of getting their wood off in time.

Everybody had lent a hand to the task, and they worked till very late in the evening, by the light of lanterns and the gas-jets on the quay.

At eleven o'clock all the cargo was piled up at the foot of the embankment.

As the cart of Dubac, the joiner, did not appear, they went to bed.

It was a terrible night, full of the clashing of chains, the creaking of planks, and the noise of boats hitting against one another.

The *Belle-Nivernaise*, strained by the shocks she received, groaned like a creature in pain.

There was no possibility of sleeping. Father Louveau, his wife, Victor and the Crew rose at dawn, leaving the children in their beds.

The Seine had risen still higher during the night.

Roughened with waves like the sea, it ran green under the low sky.

There was no sign of life on the quays.

But the ruins of roofs and fences were borne along on the stream of the current.

Beyond the bridges could be seen the silhouette of Notre-Dame, blotted in the fog.

There was not a minute to lose, for the river had already risen above the parapets of the wharf, and the little waves, licking the ends of the logs, had pulled down the piles of wood.

Up to their knees in water, François, Mother Louveau and Dubac loaded the cart.

Suddenly a loud noise close to them alarmed them.

A barge, laden with mill-stones, breaking its chain, had come and foundered against the quay, split from stem to stern.

There was a horrible tearing, followed by an ebb of the current.

And, as they stood motionless, terrified by the shipwreck, they heard a clamor behind them.

Unchained by the shock, the *Belle-Nivernaise* was floating loose from the shore.

Mother Louveau uttered a cry:

"My children!"

Victor had already rushed into the cabin.

He reappeared on deck, the youngest child in his arms.

Clara and Mimile followed him, and all stretched out their hands toward the quay.

"Take them!"

"A boat!"

"A rope!"

"What shall we do?"

It was impossible to save them all by swimming.

And the Crew ran from one side to the other, dazed and helpless.

It was necessary to bring up the boat alongside at any price.

In face of the bewildered man and the sobbing children, Victor took command, and felt himself possessed of the energy needed to save them.

He gave orders:

"Quick! Throw a rope!"

"Hurry!"

"Catch it!"

They tried it three times over.

But the *Belle-Nivernaise*, was already too far away, and the rope fell into the water.

Then Victor ran to the helm, and they heard him call:

"Don't be frightened! I take charge!"

In fact, with a vigorous turn of the tiller, he straightened the boat, which, caught broadside, was floating to leeward.

On the quay, Louveau lost his head.

He wanted to throw himself into the water to reach his children, but Dubac had seized him by the middle, while Mother Louveau covered her face so as not to see.

Now, the *Belle-Nivernaise* kept the current, and

shot with the swiftness of a tug toward the Bridge of Austerlitz.

Quietly leaning against the tiller, Victor steered, encouraged the children and told the Crew what to do.

He was sure of getting through, for he had aimed straight for the red flag, hung in the middle of the main arch to show the way to sailors.

But, O God! would there be space enough to pass under?

He saw the bridge approaching very rapidly.

"To your boat-hook, Crew! And you, Clara, hold the children tight."

He clung fast to the rudder.

Already he felt the wind from the arch in his hair.

They had reached it.

Carried on by its impetus, the *Belle-Nivernaise* disappeared under the archway, with a terrific noise, but not too quickly for the crowd collected on the Bridge of Austerlitz to see the sailor with the wooden leg miss his stroke with the boat-hook, and fall on his face, while the boy at the helm called:

"A grappling-hook! A grappling hook!"

The *Belle-Nivernaise* was under the bridge.

In the shadow of the arch, Victor distinguished clearly the enormous rings fixed in the masonry of the piers, the joinings of the vault above his head, and in perspective, the series of the other bridges framing in bits of sky.

Then it was like the widening of horizon and the dazzling of the outer-light to one coming from a cellar, a noise of hurrahs above his head, and the vision of the cathedral anchored upon the stream like a frigate.

The boat stopped short.

Some men on the bridge had succeeded in hurling a hook that stuck in the planking of the boat.

Victor ran to the mooring cable and made the rope fast to it.

The *Belle-Nivernaise* was seen to put about, to slue round the rope, and, yielding to the new power that impelled it, to bring up slowly alongside the Quay of La Tournelle, with its crew of children and its fifteen-year-old captain.

Oh, what joy that evening, to find themselves all there, round the smoking stew in the cabin of the boat — this time well moored and anchored!

The little hero has the place of honour, the captain's place.

They had not much appetite after the morning's violent emotion, but their hearts expanded after the anguish they had passed through.

They breathed freely.

The parents winked to each other across the table, as if to say:

"Just suppose we had carried him back to the commissary?"

And Father Louveau smiled from ear to ear, as his moist eyes strayed over his brood.

One would have supposed that good luck had

happened to them, that the *Belle-Nivernaise* had no more holes in her sides, or that they had won a big prize in the lottery.

The sailor overwhelmed Victor with playful blows.

It was his way of showing his affection!

"Victor, you rascal! How you put that helm about! Did you see that, Crew? I could not have done better myself; ha! ha! — I, the captain!"

The good man spent two weeks in uttering exclamations and running round the quays to tell about the turn of the tiller:

"You understand. The boat was adrift. Then he came. There!"

And he made a gesture to indicate the movement.

All this time the Seine was subsiding, and the day of departure approached.

One morning, as Victor and Louveau were pumping on the deck, the postman brought a letter.

It bore a blue seal on the back. The sailor opened the letter with a hand that trembled slightly, and as he was not much cleverer at reading than at arithmetic, he said to Victor:

"Read that to me."

And Victor read:

POLICE STATION. TWELFTH WARD.

Monsieur Louveau (François), captain, is requested to come as soon as possible to see the commissary of the police.

"That's all?"

"That's all."

Louveau was out all day.

When he came back in the evening, all his cheerfulness had disappeared.

He was sombre, morose, and silent.

Mother Louveau could not understand it, and when the children went up to play on deck, she asked:

"What is it?"

"Something is troubling me."

"Because of your cargo?"

"No, because of Victor."

And he related his visit to the commissary.

"You remember that woman that deserted him? She was not his mother."

"Oh, pooh!"

"She had stolen him."

"How do they know?"

"She herself confessed it on her deathbed to the commissary."

"Then they told you the name of his parents?"

Louveau shuddered.

"Why do you think they told me?"

"Oh, because they sent for you!"

François flew into a rage.

"If I knew, do you think I should tell you!"

He was quite flushed with anger, and went out slamming the door.

Mother Louveau was amazed.

"What is the matter with him?"

Yes, what was the matter with François?

From that day on, his manners, his speech, his character, all were changed.

He did not eat, he slept badly, he talked in his sleep.

He answered his wife!

He quarrelled with the Crew, and abused everybody, Victor more than all the rest.

When Mother Louveau, astonished, asked him what was the matter, he answered roughly:

"Nothing is the matter with me. Do I look as if anything were the matter with me? You are all in a conspiracy against me."

The poor woman's efforts were in vain.

"Upon my word, he is going crazy!"

She thought him quite cracked when, one fine evening, he made a dreadful scene with them about Maugendre.

They were at the end of their voyage, and were soon to arrive at Clamecy.

Victor and Clara were talking of their school, and the boy having said he would be delighted to see Maugendre again, Father Louveau went into a passion:

"Don't bother me with your Maugendre."

"I want to have nothing more to do with him."

The mother intervened:

"What harm has he done you?"

"He has — he has — It is no business of yours. Am not I master here?"

Alas! He was so completely the master, that instead of putting in to Corbigny, as usual, he went five miles beyond, to the deep forest.

He declared that Maugendre thought of nothing but cheating him in all their bargains, and that he should do better business with another purchaser.

They were too far from the village to think of the children's going to school.

Victor and Clara ran about the woods all day collecting sticks.

When they were weary of carrying their burdens, they put them down by the side of a ditch, and sat down on the ground among the flowers.

Victor drew a book from his pocket, and made Clara read from it. They liked to see the sun, glimmering through the branches, cast quivering lights on the page and on their hair. About them was the buzzing of thousands of little insects; in the distance, the silence of the woods.

When they were belated, they had to hasten home very quickly, through the length of the great avenue, barred with the shadows of the tree-trunks.

At the end, in an open space, they could see the mast of the *Belle-Nivernaise* and the gleam of a fire in the light mist rising from the river.

It was Mother Louveau cooking, out in the wind beside the water upon a fire of brushwood.

Near her, Mimile, with his hair as rough as a feather-duster, his shirt bursting through the rents of his trousers, lovingly watched the pot.

The little sister was sprawling on the ground.

Louveau and the Crew were smoking their pipes. One evening, at supper-time, they saw

some one issue from the wood and come toward them.

"It is Maugendre!"

It was the carpenter, grown very old and gray.

He had a stick in his hand, and seemed oppressed in speaking.

He came up to Louveau, and held out his hand to him.

"How is it that you have left me, François?"

The sailor stammered an embarrassed answer:

"Oh, I have nothing against you!"

He looked so weary that Mother Louveau was touched by it.

Without paying attention to her husband's ill-humor, she offered him a bench to sit upon.

"I hope you are not ill, M. Maugendre."

"I have taken a bad cold."

He spoke slowly, and almost in a low voice.

Trouble had softened him.

He told them he was about to leave the country, to go to live in the depths of La Nièvre.

"It is all over; I shall do no more business. I am rich now; I have money, a great deal of money. But of what good is it? I cannot buy back the happiness that I have lost."

François listened, with frowning brows.

Maugendre continued:

"The older I grow, the sadder I am to be alone. Once, I forgot when I worked; but now, my heart is no longer in my task. I find no pleasure in anything. So I am going to another country, and perhaps that will distract me."

And, as if involuntarily, his eyes turned toward the children.

At this moment, Victor and Clara emerged from the avenue with their burden of brushwood. As they saw Maugendre, they threw down their bundles and ran to him.

He received them affectionately as always, and said to Louveau, who continued gloomy:

"You are happy; you have four children. I have none."

And he sighed.

"I have nothing to complain of; it is all my own fault."

He had risen. Everybody followed his example.

"Good-bye, Victor. Work hard and love your parents; you owe it to them."

He laid his hand on his shoulder, and looked at him for a long time.

"It seems to me that if I had a child, he would be like him."

Opposite, Louveau, with an angry expression, looked as if he were saying:

"Get off with you!"

Nevertheless, just as the carpenter was leaving, François felt an impulse of pity, and called to him:

"Maugendre, won't you take supper with us?"

It was said as if against his will, in a gruff tone that discouraged acceptance.

The old man shook his head.

"Thank you, I am not hungry. The happiness of others, you see, hurts a man when he is very sad."

And he moved away, bent over his cane.

Louveau never said a word all the evening.

He spent the night in walking on the deck, and went out in the morning without telling anybody. He betook himself to the priest's house.

It was near the church, and was a large square building, having a court in front, and a vegetable garden behind.

Some hens were pecking about near the threshold. A cow, tied to a post, was lowing in the grass. Louveau felt his heart lightened because of the resolution he had taken. As he opened the gate, he said to himself with a sigh of satisfaction that he should be rid of his cares when he came out. He found the curé seated in his cool dining-room.

The priest had finished his meal, and was dozing lightly, his head bowed over his breviary.

Roused by Louveau's entrance, he marked the page, and shutting the book, asked the sailor to sit down. The poor fellow kept twisting his cap in his fingers.

"Come, François, what do you want?"

He wanted some advice, and asked permission to tell his whole story.

"Because you know, sir, I am not very clever. I am not brilliant, ha! ha! as my wife says."

And, put at his ease by this preamble, he related his story, much out of breath, and very red, gazing obstinately at the vizor of his cap.

"You remember, sir, that Maugendre told you he was a widower? It is fifteen years since; his wife came to Paris to take a place as nurse. She

showed her child to the doctor, as is the custom, nursed it for the last time, and then gave it to an agent."

The priest interrupted:

"What is an agent, François?"

"It is a woman, sir, who is intrusted with the charge of carrying back the children of nurses to the country they came from. She carries them in a basket on her back like poor little kittens! There are some honest people in the business, sir. But Mother Maugendre fell in with a woman who was not known, a witch who stole children and let them out to other lazy women, to trail about the streets and rouse people's pity."

"What is this you are telling me, François?"

"The pure truth, sir. That rascally woman stole a lot of children, and Maugendre's baby among the rest. She kept him till he was four. She wanted to teach him to beg; but he was the son of an honest man, and refused to stretch out his hand. Then she deserted him in the street, and then, — guess if you can! But it happened that six months ago, at the hospital, as she was about to die, remorse overtook her. I know what that is, sir; it makes a fellow suffer devilishly."

And he raised his eyes to the ceiling, as if to swear he was telling the truth, poor man.

"Then she sent for the commissary. She told him the name of the child. The commissary repeated it to me. It is Victor."

The curé let fall his breviary.

"Victor is Maugendre's son?"

"It is certain!"

The priest could not get over it.

He stuttered a phrase in which the words "poor child," and "finger of God," could be distinguished.

He rose, walked through the room, approached the window, poured himself out a glass of water, and ended by stopping in front of Louveau, with his hands plunged into his sash.

He was searching for a phrase that applied to the event, and as he could not find one, he said simply:

"Well, you must give him back to his father."

Louveau shuddered.

"That is just what troubles me, sir. For the six months I have known this, I have not had the courage to tell it to anybody, not even to my wife. We took so much pains to bring up that child. We have been through so many hardships together, that, to-day, I do not know how I shall be able to part from him."

This was all true, and if Maugendre seemed much to be pitied, it was possible to feel sorry for poor François, too.

Caught between these two contradictory emotions, the curé was perspiring in great drops, and mentally invoked light from above.

Forgetting that Louveau had come to ask his advice, he said, in a choking voice:

"Look here, François, put yourself in my place and think what you would advise me."

The sailor hung down his head.

"I understand that I must give back Victor, sir. I felt it the other day when Maugendre came and took us by surprise. It made my heart ache to see him so old and sad and broken. I was ashamed, as if I had had his money, stolen money, in my pocket. I could no longer bear my secret alone, and I came to tell it to you."

"And you did well, Louveau," said the curé, enchanted to find the sailor furnish him with a solution. "It is never too late to repair a fault. I will go with you to Maugendre. You will confess everything to him."

"To-morrow, sir!"

"No, François, at once."

And, seeing the poor man's distress, and his convulsive twisting of his cap, he implored feebly:

"I entreat you to do this, Louveau, while we both have our minds made up!"

CHAPTER V.

MAUGENDRE'S AMBITION.

A SON!

Maugendre has a son!

He devours him with his eyes, as he is sitting opposite on the seat of the railway-carriage, that hums as it carries them toward Nevers.

It is as if the boy had been kidnapped.

The old man has carried off his son almost without saying "Thank you," like a rustic who wins the highest prize at the lottery and runs away with it.

He did not wish to leave the child within reach of all his old affections.

He is avaricious of love, as he used to be of gold.

No borrowing, no sharing!

But his treasure all for himself alone, with no eyes about to watch.

Maugendre's ears buzz like the express-train.

His head is hot as the locomotive.

And his dream travels faster than all the locomotives and all the express-trains, clearing at a bound days, months and years.

What he dreams of is a Victor of twenty, dressed in dark green, with silver buttons.

A student at the School of Forestry.

We might almost say that young Maugendre wears a sword at his side, and a cocked hat over his ear, like a student at the Polytechnic; for all schools and all uniforms are a little mixed in Maugendre's dream.

And what difference does it make? Gold lace and buttons are nothing to the carpenter.

He has money enough to pay for all that, and Victor shall be a "gentleman," bedizened from top to toe.

Men will stand before him, hat in hand.

Beautiful ladies will be mad about him.

And in a corner, there will be an old man, with horny hands, who will bridle and say:

"That is my son! Come, my son!"

"My son" is thinking, too, his little cap pulled over his eyes, — till the time comes for the cocked hat and gold lace.

He would not like to have his father see him cry.

The separation was so sudden!

Clara gave him a kiss that still burns on his cheek.

Father Louveau turned aside.

Mother Louveau was quite pale.

And Mimile brought him his porringer of soup to console him.

All, down to Mimile!

Oh, how will they live without him?

The future student of the School of Forestry is so agitated that he answers: "Yes, Monsieur Maugendre," every time that his father speaks to him.

The little sailor of the *Belle-Nivernaise* has not come to the end of his tribulations.

It does not cost money alone to become a "gentleman," but many sacrifices and many sorrows also.

Victor is conscious of this, while the rapid train passes whistling over the bridges, above the Faubourg de Nevers.

It seems to him that he has already seen, somewhere in a distant and mournful past, those contracted streets and those windows narrow as prison ventilators, from which tattered rags are hanging.

Now, they have the pavement under their feet. About them moves and hums the ordinary crowd on the platform of a railway station; a throng of curious people, the jostling of men carrying trunks, the rumbling of cabs and heavy station-omnibuses, that travellers, laden with rugs done up in shawl-straps, take noisily by assault.

Victor and his father leave the station in a carriage.

The carpenter holds fast to his idea.

He desires an immediate transformation.

And he takes "his son" straight to the school tailor.

The shop is new, and the counters shining; well-dressed gentlemen, like those to be seen in the colored illustrations hanging on the walls, open the door to their customers with a little patronizing smile. They place before Father Maugendre the smartest of the fashion-papers, in which a student is smoking in the company of a lady in a

riding-habit, a gentleman in complete hunting costume, and a bride dressed in white satin.

The tailor has at hand precisely the model of the coat desired, padded before and behind, and furnished with square skirts and gilt buttons.

He displays it to the carpenter, who cries, beaming with pride:

"You will look like a soldier in it!"

A man in his shirt-sleeves, carrying a yard-measure round his neck, approaches young Maugendre.

He measures his hips, his waist, and vertebral column.

This operation recalls to the little sailor memories that make his eyes swim with tears! Poor Father Louveau's tantrums, the tempers of the woman of sense, — all he has left behind him. All this is done with now.

The correct young man that Victor sees in uniform, reflected in the tall glass before which customers try on their clothes, has nothing in common with the youngest hand of the *Belle-Nivernaise.*

The tailor kicks disdainfully the despised blouse under the table, as if it were a bundle of rags.

Victor feels it is all his past that they have made him renounce.

What, renounce? They even forbid him now to remember it.

"You must break with the vices of your early education," said the principal severely, not trying to hide his mistrust.

And, in order to facilitate this regeneration, it is decided that young Maugendre shall leave the school only the first Sunday in the month.

Oh, how he cries, the first evening, in the depths of the cold and melancholy dormitory, while the other boys are snoring in their iron beds, and the under-master is devouring a novel, in secret, by the light of the night lamp!

How he suffers during the cursed play-hour, while his comrades are pulling and mauling him!

How sad he is in the study-hour, his head bent over his desk, trembling at the ill-humors of the under-master, who raps with all his might on the rostrum, and is always repeating the same phrase:

"Keep quiet, gentlemen."

This harsh voice stirs up all the dregs of his wretched memories, and poisons his life.

It recalls the dreary days of his earliest childhood, the dirty lodging in the Faubourg du Temple, the blows and brawls, and all he had forgotten.

He clings desperately to the image of Clara, and the *Belle-Nivernaise*, as to a sunny spot in the gloom of his life.

It is probably on this account that the under-master finds with amazement drawings of boats on all the pages of young Maugendre's books.

Always the same long boat reproduced on every page with the obstinacy of one possessed. Sometimes confined, as if within a canal, it mounts the narrow ascent of the margins; sometimes it runs aground in the middle of a theorem, spatter-

ing the figures contained in it, and the corollaries in fine print; again, it proceeds with swelling sails over the oceans of the planispheres.

There it struts at ease, unfurls its sails, and lets its flag float.

The principal, weary of the circumstantial reports addressed to him on this subject, ends by speaking of it to M. Maugendre, senior.

The carpenter cannot get over his surprise.

"He is obstinate as an ass."

"So intelligent!"

"It is impossible to teach him anything."

And nobody will understand that young Maugendre has learned to read in the midst of the woods, over Clara's shoulder, and that this is not the same thing as studying geometry under the rod of a hirsute master.

This is why young Maugendre is dropped from the class of "intermediates" to the class of "primaries."

There must be indeed a singular difference between the lessons of the schoolmaster of Corbigny and those of the professors of the school of Nevers.

All the distance that separates teaching in a rabbit-skin bonnet from teaching in an ermine cap.

Father Maugendre is in despair.

It seems to him that the forester in a cocked hat is receding with great strides.

He scolds, implores, and promises:

"Do you want lessons? Do you want masters? I will give you the best there are, and the dearest."

In the meanwhile, young Maugendre becomes a

dunce, and the quarterly reports pitilessly prove his "depravity."

He himself is conscious of his stupidity.

He sinks every day deeper in gloom and melancholy.

If Clara and the others could see what has been made of their Victor!

How they would come to open wide the doors of his prison!

How gladly they would offer to share with him their last crust, their last bit of planking!

For they, too, are unfortunate.

Their affairs are going from bad to worse.

The boat grows older and older.

Victor knows this through Clara's letters, which reach him from time to time, marked with an enormous and furious "examined," scratched with a red pencil by the principal, who detests "this intrusive correspondence."

"Ah, when you were here!" said Clara's letters, always equally tender, but more and more depressed — "Ah, if you were with us!"

Might it not indeed be said that all went well in those old times, and that all would be set right if Victor returned?

Very well! Victor will make everything right.

He will buy a new boat.

He will comfort Clara.

He will restore the business to its old footing.

He will show them that they have neither loved an ingrate nor adopted a ne'er-do-weel.

But for that he must become a man.

He must make money.

He must learn.

And Victor opens his book at the right page.

Now, the arrows may fly, the master may rap with all his might on the rostrum, and shout in his parrot-like way:

"Keep quiet, gentlemen!"

Victor does not raise his head.

He draws no more boats.

He despises the paper pellets that flatten themselves against his face.

He drudges and drudges.

"A letter for young Maugendre."

The memory of Clara is a blessing, coming to take him by surprise in the middle of the study-hour, to encourage him and bring him the perfume of freedom and affection.

Victor hides his head in his desk to kiss the shaky address, painfully traced in zigzag, as if a perpetual pitching of the boat had swayed the table where Clara wrote.

Alas! it is not the pitching of the boat, it is emotion that has made Clara's hand tremble.

"It is all over, dear Victor, the *Belle-Nivernaise* will sail no more.

"She is quite dead, and her death is ruin to us.

"They have hung a dismal placard up behind:

"WOOD FOR SALE.

"THIS BOAT TO BE BROKEN UP.

"Some men have come, who have made an estimate of everything, and numbered everything, from the hook

of the Crew down to the cradle where the little sister slept. It seems they are going to sell everything, and we shall have nothing left.

"What is to become of us?

"Mamma is like to die of sorrow, and Papa is so changed —"

Victor did not finish the letter.

The words danced before his eyes; it was as if something had exploded in his face, and his ears rang.

Ah, now, he was far away from the class!

Exhausted by work, grief and fever, he went out of his head.

He thought he was floating in the middle of the Seine, on the beautiful fresh stream.

He wanted to dip his forehead in the river.

Then he heard the ringing of a bell.

No doubt it was a tug passing in the fog; then he heard a sound of rising waters, and cried:

"The flood! The flood!"

He felt a chill at the mere thought of the shadow accumulated under the arch of the bridge; and, in the midst of these visions, the under-master's face appeared to him very near, under the lamp-screen, hirsute and scared:

"Are you ill, Maugendre?"

Young Maugendre is very ill.

It is useless for the doctor to shake his head, when the poor father, who accompanies him to the door of the school, asks him in a voice choking with anguish:

"He won't die, will he?"

It is easy to see the doctor is not confident.

His gray hairs are not confident either.

They say "No," flimsily, as if they were afraid of compromising themselves.

There is no more talk of the green coat and cocked hat.

It is only a question of keeping young Maugendre from dying.

The doctor has said plainly that it will be well to give the boy his liberty, if he should recover —

If he should recover!

The thought of losing the child he has just found kills all the ambitious desires of the prosperous father.

It is all over; he renounces his dream.

He is quite ready to bury the student of Forestry with his own hands.

He will nail down the coffin-lid, if necessary.

He will not wear mourning for him.

But, at least, let the other boy consent to live.

Let him speak to him, get up and throw his arms round his neck, saying:

"Cheer up, father. I am well again."

The carpenter leaned over Victor's bed.

It is finished. The old tree is pierced to the core. Maugendre's heart has grown tender.

"I will let you go, my boy. You shall return to them, and shall sail with them again. And it will be too much joy for me to see you sometimes, by the way."

At present, the bell no longer rings the hours of recreation, of the refectory and study.

It is vacation, and the great college is deserted.

No other noise than that of a jet of water in the court of honour, and the chattering of sparrows in the yards.

The rumbling of the rare carriages comes distant and dulled, for they have put straw in the street.

It is in the midst of this silence and solitude that young Maugendre comes to himself.

He is much surprised to find himself in a very white bed, surrounded by ample cotton curtains that spread about an isolation of twilight and peace.

He would like to raise himself on the pillow, and push aside the curtains to see where he is; but, although he feels a delicious sense of repose, he has not the strength, and waits.

But there are voices whispering round him.

On the floor, there is a sound as of steps taken on tiptoe, and even a well-known thumping, something like a broom-handle walking over the boards.

Victor has already heard this before.

Where could it have been?

Oh, on the deck of the *Belle-Nivernaise !*

That 's it! That must be it!

And the patient, summoning all his strength, calls in a weak voice, that he thinks is very loud:

" Hulloa! Crew! Hulloa! "

The curtains are pulled open, and in the dazzling daylight, he sees all the beloved beings he has so often called in his delirium.

All, yes, all!

They are all there, Clara, Maugendre, Father Louveau, Mother Louveau, the little sister, and the old scalded heron, thin as his boat-hook, smiling immoderately in his silent way.

Then, all arms are stretched out to him, all heads are bent over him, and there are kisses for everybody, smiles, hand-shakes, and questions.

"Where am I? How are you here?"

But the doctor's orders are explicit. The gray hairs do not joke when they give orders.

He must keep his arms under the coverlet, be quiet, and not get excited.

So, to prevent his boy from talking, Maugendre talks all the time.

"Only think that it is precisely ten days ago — the very day that you fell ill — I came to see the principal to speak with him about you. He told me you were making progress, that you worked like a slave. You may imagine how pleased I was! I asked to see you. They sent for you, and just then your master rushed into the principal's study much bewildered. You had that moment had a violent attack of fever. I ran to the infirmary; you did not recognize me. Eyes like candles, and such a delirium! Ah, my poor little boy, how ill you have been! I have never left you for a minute. You were out of your head — you talked of the *Belle-Nivernaise*, of Clara, of a new boat, and what not. Then I recollected the letter, Clara's letter; they had found it in your hands, and had given it to me. And I had forgotten it, do you see? I drew it out of my pocket, beat my

brains, and said to myself: 'Maugendre, you must not let your own trouble make you forget the pain of others.' I wrote to all these people to come to us. No answer came. I took advantage of a day when you were better, and went after them; I brought them to my house, where they are living now, and where they are going to live until some way has been found of putting their affairs straight for them. Is n't it so, Louveau?"

There are tears in everybody's eyes, and, dear me! so much the worse for the doctor's gray hairs, both Victor's arms come out from under the coverlet, and Maugendre receives an embrace such as he has never had before — the true kiss of an affectionate child.

Then, as it is not possible to move Victor home, they plan a way of living.

Clara is to remain with the patient, to sweeten his draughts, and amuse him.

Mother Louveau will go to keep house, and François will superintend a building that the carpenter has undertaken in the Grande-Rue.

As to Maugendre, he is leaving for Clamecy.

He means to see some acquaintances who have a large contract in wood-floats.

These people will be delighted to employ an able sailor like Louveau.

No, no! no objections, no resistance. It is all settled; a very simple thing.

It certainly is not Victor who objects.

They take him out of bed now, and roll his big armchair up to the window.

He is all alone with Clara, in the silent infirmary.

Victor is delighted.

He blesses his illness. He blesses the sale of the *Belle-Nivernaise.* He blesses all the sales and all the illnesses in the world.

"Do you remember, Clara, how I used to hold the tiller, and you came to sit beside me with your knitting?"

Clara remembers so well that she blushes, and they are both embarrassed.

For now he is no longer the little fellow in a red cap whose feet did not touch the deck when he climbed astride the rudder.

And, as for her, when she comes in the morning and takes off her little shawl to throw it on the bed, she looks like a real grown girl, her arms are so round in her sleeves and her waist is so slender.

"Come early, Clara, and stay as late as possible."

It is so pleasant to breakfast and dine opposite each other, very near the window, sheltered by the white curtains.

They recall their earliest childhood, and the porridge eaten on the edge of the bed, with the same spoon.

Ah, those memories of childhood! They flutter about the infirmary of the school, like birds in an aviary. They must make their nests in all the corners of the curtains, for there are fresh ones, newly hatched, taking flight every morning.

And certainly, to hear these conversations of the past, the pair might be supposed to be octogena-

rians, only looking back over the distance behind them.

Cannot it be that there is a future, which may prove very interesting, too?

Yes, there is a future, and they often think of it, — so often that they never speak of it.

Besides, it is not indispensable to make phrases in order to talk. They have a certain way of holding each other's hands and flushing on every occasion that speaks plainer than words.

Victor and Clara talk in this language all day long.

It is probably for this that they are so often silent.

And it is for this, too, that the days pass so quickly, and the month slips noiselessly away without their observing it.

It is on this account also that the doctor's gray hairs bristle, and that he is obliged to turn his patient out of the infirmary.

Just at this time, Father Maugendre returns from his journey.

He finds everybody at home, and when poor Louveau asks him very anxiously: "Well, do they want me over there?" Maugendre cannot keep from laughing.

"Do they want you, old fellow? They need a captain for a new craft, and thanked me for the present I was making them."

"Who are they?"

Father Louveau is so enchanted that he asks no more questions.

Everybody sets out on the way to Clamecy, without knowing anything more about it.

What joy, when they reach the bank of the canal!

There, at the wharf, decked with flags from top to bottom, a magnificent, brand-new boat lifts its polished mast among the foliage.

They are adding the finishing touches, and the stern-post, where the name of the boat is inscribed, remains covered with a gray cloth.

A cry bursts from the mouths of all:

"Oh what a beautiful boat!"

Louveau cannot believe his eyes.

He feels a deucedly strong emotion, that makes his eyes tingle, opens his mouth a foot wide, and shakes his earrings like two salad-baskets:

"It is too beautiful! I shall never dare to run a boat like that. It is not made to sail with. It ought to be put under a glass case."

Maugendre is obliged to push him by force on the foot-bridge, from which the Crew is making signs to them.

What?

The Crew himself is restored.

Restored, repaired and caulked afresh.

He has an entirely new boat-hook and wooden leg. It is a kindness of the builder, a clever man who knows how to do things well.

Only see:

The deck is of waxed wood, surrounded with a balustrade. There is a bench to sit upon, and an awning for shelter.

The hold is shaped so as to carry a double cargo.

And the cabin — oh, the cabin!

Three rooms!

A kitchen!

Mirrors!

Louveau drags Maugendre on deck.

He is moved and shaken with emotion, — like his earrings.

He stammers:

"My dear Maugendre — "

"What is it?"

"You have forgotten but one thing — "

"Well?"

"You have not told me for whom I am to run the boat?"

"You want to know?"

"I should think I did."

"Very well — for yourself."

"What? But then — the boat — "

"Is yours!"

What a shock, my children! It takes one's breath away!

Fortunately the builder — who is a clever man — has had the bright idea of putting a bench on deck.

Louveau sinks upon it, as if stunned.

"It is not possible, — I cannot accept — "

But Maugendre has an answer for everything:

"Why not? You forget our old debt, — the money you spent for Victor! Don't worry, François; I still owe you the most."

And the two comrades embrace like brothers.

This time it has even come to crying.

Surely Maugendre has arranged everything to make the surprise complete, for while they are hugging each other on the deck, the curé is seen emerging from the wood, a banner streaming in the wind, and a band going ahead.

What more is this?

The blessing of the boat, of course!

All Clamecy has come in a procession to assist at the festival.

The banner floats on the breeze. And the music plays:

"Zim — boom — boom!"

The faces of all are radiant. And over all there is a bright sun that makes the silver cross and the brass instruments of the band sparkle.

What a charming festival!

The cloth that concealed the stern-post is taken off; the name of the boat stands out in beautiful gold letters on a light blue ground:

The Nouvelle-Nivernaise. Hurrah! for the *Nouvelle-Nivernaise*! May she have a life as long as the old one, and a happier old age!

The priest has approached the boat.

Behind him, the singers and musicians are drawn up in a single line.

The banner is in the background.

"*Benedicat Deus* —"

Victor is the godfather and Clara is the godmother.

The curé has made them advance to the edge of the wharf, very near him.

They take hold of hands, and are shy and trembling.

They stammer awkwardly the phrases the choir boy prompts, while the curé shakes his holy-water sprinkler over them:

"*Benedicat Deus* —"

Do not they look like a young couple at the altar?

This thought occurs to all. Perhaps it comes to them, too, for they dare not look at each other, and become more and more agitated as the ceremony proceeds.

It is over.

The crowd retires, and the *Nouvelle-Nivernaise* is blessed. But the musicians cannot be allowed to leave like this, without refreshment.

And, while Louveau pours a bumper for the band, Maugendre winks at Mother Louveau, takes the godfather and godmother by the hand, and turning to the priest, says: —

"Now the baptism is over, sir, when shall we have the wedding?"

Victor and Clara blush red as poppies.

Mimile and the little sister clap their hands.

And, in the midst of the general enthusiasm, Father Louveau, much excited, leans over his daughter's shoulder.

The honest sailor laughs from ear to ear, and, enjoying his joke beforehand, says in a bantering tone:

"Tell me, Clara, now's the time — suppose we take him back to the commissary?"

HOW JARJAILLE WENT TO HEAVEN

AND OTHER STORIES.

HOW JARJAILLE WENT TO HEAVEN.

PROVENÇAL LEGEND.

IMITATED FROM LOUIS ROUMIEUX.

JARJAILLE, porter at Saint-Rémy, let himself die one fine morning, and down he toppled into eternity. . . Well, well! tumble who must. Eternity is vast, black as pitch, deep and measureless enough to frighten anybody. Jarjaille did not know where to go; he wandered about in the dark, feeling his arms around blindly, his teeth chattering. At last, finally, he saw a little light above, quite high up. To that he went. It was the gate of the Good God.

Jarjaille rapped: Pan! pan!

"Who's there?" cried Saint Peter.

"It is I."

"Who is I?"

"Jarjaille."

"Jarjaille of Saint-Rémy?"

"Just so."

"Why, you rascal," said Saint Peter, "are not you ashamed to want to enter Paradise when for

twenty years you have not once been to mass? You, who eat meat every Friday — when you can get it — and Saturdays if you have it! . . You, who, to scoff at holy things, call thunder the snail's drum, because the snails come out when it storms. . . . You, who replied to your father's saintly word: 'Jarjaille, the Good God will punish you' —'The Good God indeed! who ever saw him? when a man is dead, he's dead.' . . You, in short, who deny everything, and blaspheme till you make one shudder, what business have you to present yourself here, forsaken of God?"

Poor Jarjaille answered:

"I don't deny it. I am a sinner, a miserable sinner. But who could ever suppose that after death there would still be so many mysteries? Well, I was mistaken; and now the wine is drawn and I've got to drink it. . . But, at least, great Saint Peter, let me see my uncle for a minute, just to tell him what is going on at Saint-Rémy."

"What uncle?"

"My uncle Matéri, who was a White Penitent."

"Your uncle Matéri! why he is in Purgatory for a hundred years."

"For a hundred years! What did he do?"

"You remember that he carried the cross in processions? Well, one day some jolly fellows put their heads together, and one of them called out: 'Look at Matéri bearing the cross!' A little farther on another began: 'Look at Matéri bearing the cross!' And, finally, a third pointed at him, crying out: 'Look! look what Matéri is

bearing!'. . On that Matéri lost all patience and replied: 'What am I bearing? If I bore you I should be bearing, for sure, a fine jackanapes.'.. And thereupon he had an apoplexy, and died in his anger."

"Poor Matéri! — Well, at any rate, let me see my aunt Dorothea who was so — so devout."

"Don't know her — belongs to the devil probably."

"Oh! well, if she has gone to the devil I am not surprised. Just imagine that with her great airs of devotion — "

"Jarjaille, I have no time to stay here. I must go and open the other gate for a poor sweeper, whose donkey has just sent him to Paradise with a kick."

"Oh, great Saint Peter! you are so kind — and sight, you know, costs nothing — do let me have just one look into your Paradise — they say it is so fine. . ."

"Té, pardi! — it is n't likely I should let a vile Huguenot like you look in."

"Oh! but, great saint, remember that my father, who is a Rhone boatman, carries your banner in the processions."

"Well," said the saint, "so be it. For your father's sake I 'll let you look in. . . But remember, friend, the agreement: only the tip end of your nose and just enough of your eyes to see with."

"Not an inch more."

On which the celestial turnkey half-opened the gate and said to Jarjaille: "There! now look.". .

But all of a minute, veering about, behold my Jarjaille entering Paradise backward.

"What are you doing?" cried Saint Peter.

"That great light blinds me," replied Jarjaille. "I must enter hindpart foremost. But you be easy; as soon as I get my nose in, as you said, I'll go no farther."

"Well! well!" thought the Blessed one, "if I'm not caught on my own hook! . . And there's that blackguard in Paradise!"

"Oh!" said Jarjaille, "how comfortable you are here. It is fine! And what music!"

After a minute or two, the holy gateman said: "When you have looked enough . . . you'll go out, I suppose . . . I really haven't the time to stay here."

"Don't put yourself out for me," returned Jarjaille; "if you have anything to do, go and do it. As for me, I'll go out — when I go out. There's no hurry."

"Yah! but that's not what was agreed upon."

"Goodness! holy man, how excited you are! It might be different if you had n't so much room here . . . but, thanks be to God, it is not space that's lacking."

"But I tell you to go out, for if the Good God came by — "

"Oh! in that case, settle it as you can. I've always heard say, 'Let well alone.' I am very well here, and I shall stay."

Saint Peter waggled his head, and stamped his feet. Then he went to find Saint Yves.

"Yves," he said, "you are a councillor, and I want you to give me a bit of advice."

"Two, if you like," responded Saint Yves.

"You would never believe what has happened to me. Here's the case — thus — and so. Now, what must I do?"

"You must," replied Saint Yves, "find a good lawyer and a sheriff, and they must summon the said Jarjaille to appear before God."

The two saints went in search of a lawyer. But lawyers in Paradise! Nobody had ever seen one. They looked for a sheriff; still less.

Saint Peter was at his wits' end.

Just then Saint Luke came by.

"What is the matter with you, my poor Peter?" he said. "Why do you look so glum? Has our Lord been rating you again?"

"Oh," said he, "my man, hold your tongue! A curse has come upon me. A certain fellow, named Jarjaille, has got into heaven by a fluke, and I don't know how to get him out."

"Where does he come from?"

"Saint-Rémy."

"From Saint-Rémy?" exclaimed Saint Luke. "Eh! my God, how innocent you are! Why, it is nothing at all to get that man out. Listen to me! I am, as you know, the friend of bulls and the patron of drovers. For this reason I roam about the Camargue, Arles, Nîmes, Beaucaire, Tarascon. I am well acquainted with their worthy folk, and I know just how to take them. Those fellows would jump into the fire to see a bull race.

Wait a bit, and I'll undertake to get him out, your Jarjaille."

Just then a flock of little angels flew by, so chubby!

"Hi, little ones!" cried Saint Luke. "Hist! hist!"

The little angels came down.

"Go very softly outside of Paradise, and when you are there, rush past the gate crying out, as the people do at Saint-Rémy when there's a bull race: 'The bulls! the bulls! Oh té! oh té!'"

That is what the little angels did. They went out of Paradisê, and when they got before the gate, they tore along, crying out: "The bulls! the bulls! Oh té! oh té!"

Hearing that, Jarjaille, my good God! looked round stupefied: "Tron de l'èr! What here! *here* they have bull-races? Quick! quick!" And with that he ran like a madman and rushed out of Paradise, poor soul!..

Saint Peter shut the gate after him, and put up the bar; then, passing his head through the wicket, he said, laughing:

"Hey, Jarjaille! how do you feel now?"

"Oh!" replied Jarjaille, "it can't be helped. If it had really been the bulls I should never have regretted my share of Paradise."

So saying, he plunged, head foremost, into eternity.

THE FIG AND THE SLUGGARD.

ALGERIAN LEGEND.

IN the lazy and voluptuous little town of Blidah there lived, some years before the French occupation, a brave Moor, who was named by his father Sidi Lakdar, and nicknamed by the people of his native town the Sluggard.

You must know that the Moors of Algeria are the laziest beings upon earth, those of Blidah especially, no doubt because of the orange and lemon fragrance with which the town is scented. But, in the matter of idleness and indifference, no one among all the Blidians came up to the waist, as one may say, of Sidi Lakdar. That worthy person had raised his vice to the level of a profession. Others were embroiderers, coffee-sellers, spice-dealers. Sidi Lakdar, he was a sluggard.

At the death of his father he inherited a tiny garden under the ramparts of the town, with little white walls which were crumbling down, a gate among the bushes which did not close, some fig-trees, a few bananas, and two or three brooks glistening through the grass. There he passed his life, lying at full length, silent, motionless, red

ants filling his beard. When he was hungry, he stretched out his hand and picked up a fig or a banana fallen beside him; if he had had to get up and gather the fruit from the branches, he would rather have died of hunger. Consequently, the fruit in his garden rotted where it hung, and the little birds swarmed in the trees.

Such consummate indolence made Lakdar very popular in his neighborhood. They respected him as a saint. The ladies of the town, who went to eat sweetmeats in the cemetery, walked their mules as they passed in front of his little inclosure, and whispered to one another behind their white masks. Men bowed piously; and every day, when school was out, there was always a flock of ragamuffins, in red caps and striped silk shirts, perched upon the walls, endeavoring to disturb that beautiful sloth, making a racket, calling Lakdar by his nickname, and flinging their orange-peels at him.

Waste of trouble! The sluggard never stirred. Now and then they heard him call from the depths of the tall grass: "Look out! look out! presently I 'll be up." But he never got up.

Now it happened that one of these little scamps, coming so often to tease the sluggard, was, somehow, touched by grace, and took, all of a sudden, such a fancy for horizontal existence, that he informed his father he should no longer go to school, and meant to make himself a sluggard.

"Sluggard, you!"—said the father, a worthy turner of pipe-stems, diligent as a bee, and seated

at his lathe by cockcrow. "You, a sluggard! — That's a pretty notion!" . .

"Yes, father, I wish to be a sluggard, like Sidi Lakdar."

"Not so, my son. You'll be a turner like your father; or a clerk in the Cadi's court like your uncle, but never will I let you be a sluggard. — Come, be off to school, or I'll break this new bit of cherry wood on your ribs. Gee up, you little jackass!"

In view of the cherry stick, the boy did not insist. But instead of going to school he went to a Moorish bazaar and crawled into the booth of a merchant between two piles of Smyrna rugs, where he stayed all day at full length, looking at the Moorish lanterns, the blue cloth purses, the gilt corselets as they glittered in the sun, and inhaling the penetrating odor of attar of rose, and the warm woollen smell of the burnous. This was how he passed his school hours.

At the end of a few days his father got wind of the thing; but in vain did he shout and storm and blaspheme the name of Allah; in vain did he warm the loins of the little man with all the sticks of cherry-wood in his shop; nothing would do. The boy persisted in saying: "I want to be a sluggard. — I will be a sluggard. . . " and he was always to be found stretched out in a corner.

At last, of warfare weary, and having consulted clerk Ali, the father came to a decision.

"Listen to me," he said to his son. "As you are so determined to be a sluggard I shall take you

to Lakdar. He will put you through an examination, and if you really have a vocation for his trade, I will ask him to keep you as an apprentice."

"That suits me," replied the boy.

No later than the very next day they went, well perfumed with vervain and heads freshly shaved, to talk with the Sluggard in his little garden.

The gate was always open. So the pair could enter without knocking; but as the grass was very thick and very high they had some difficulty in finding the master of the inclosure. However, they presently discovered him, lying at full length under the fig-trees at the farther end, in a whirl of little birds and rampant plants — a bundle of yellow rags, who greeted them with a grunt.

"The Lord be with you, Sidi Lakdar," said the father bowing, with his hand on his heart. "Here is my son, who is positively determined to be a sluggard. I bring him to you to be examined; you can find out if he has the vocation. If he has, I shall ask you to take him as apprentice. I will pay whatever is proper."

Sidi Lakdar, without replying, made them a sign to sit down in the grass beside him. The father sat down; the boy lay down, which was a good sign to begin with. Then the three looked at one another without speaking.

It was high noon — such heat! such glare! — The little garden seemed asleep. Nothing was heard but the crackling of the gorse bursting its pods in the sun, the warbling of the brooks

through the grass, and the flight of the drowsy birds among the leafage with a sound like the opening and shutting of a fan. Every now and then, an over ripe fig would fall, skipping from branch to branch; and Sidi Lakdar would put forth his hand with a weary air and convey the fruit to his mouth. The boy did not take that trouble. The finest figs fell close beside him, but he never so much as turned his head. The Sluggard observed, from the corner of his eye, that magnificent indolence, but he said nothing.

One hour, two hours went by. — You can fancy that the poor pipe-stem turner found the time hang heavy. But he dared not speak, and sat there motionless, his eyes fixed, his legs crossed, obsessed by the atmosphere of sloth which floated in the heat of the garden with a vague odor of banana and baked oranges.

Suddenly, down came a fat fig flat upon the boy's cheek. By Allah, such a fig! rosy, sugary, perfumed like a honeycomb. To put it into his mouth the boy had only to give it a push with his finger. But he thought that too fatiguing, and he stayed as he was without stirring, the fruit upon his cheek. In the end, however, it became too tempting; he blinked his eye at his father and called to him in a sleepy voice:

"Papa," he said, "papa — put it in my mouth."

At these words, Sidi Lakdar, who held a fig in his hand, flung it far away from him, and said to the father in an angry voice:

"So this is the child you bring me as an appren-

tice! It is he who is my master! It is he who should give me lessons!"

Then, rising, and falling on his knees, his head to earth before the boy lying at full length:

"I salute you," he said, "oh, father of Sloth!"

THE NEW MASTER.

It is much changed, our little school, since the departure of M. Hamel. In his day, we always had a few minutes' grace in the morning on arriving. We used to stand round the stove to warm our fingers a little, and shake the snow or the hoarfrost off our clothes. We talked a bit, quietly, showing one another what we had in our baskets. That gave to those who lived a good ways off the time to get in to prayers and roll-call. But to-day it is no longer the same thing. We must be on time to the very instant. That Prussian, Klotz, our new master, is no joke. Five minutes before eight he is standing at the desk, his big cane beside him, and sorrow to those who are tardy! You should just hear the patter of the wooden shoes scurrying through the courtyard, and the breathless voices crying out on the threshold: "Present!"

The trouble is there is no excuse with that terrible Prussian. It is no use saying: "I helped my mother to carry the linen to the washhouse," or "Father took me along with him to market." M. Klotz listens to nothing. One would really suppose that miserable foreigner thinks we have no home or family, and that we came into the

world scholars with books under our arm, expressly born to learn German and get blows from a cudgel. Ah! I had my share of those in the beginning. Our saw-mill is so far from the school, and the daylight does come so late in winter! At last, as I always came home at night with red welts on my fingers, my back, and everywhere, my father decided to put me with M. Klotz as a boarder; but it was hard work to get used to that!

Because, in addition to M. Klotz, the boarders have Mme. Klotz, who is worse than he, and a crowd of little Klotzes that run after us on the staircase, crying out: "The French are all fools, the French are all fools." Luckily, when my mother comes to see me Sundays she always brings me provisions, and as these people are very greedy, I stand pretty well in the household.

One boy whom I pity with all my heart is Gaspard Hénin. He sleeps, as I do, in the little chamber under the roof. He has been an orphan these two years, and his uncle the miller, wanting to get rid of him, put him to school for all the year round. When he first came he was a stout boy of ten, who looked more like fifteen, accustomed to run and play in the open air and never supposing that people must learn to read. So, at first, he did nothing but cry and sob, like a puppy tied up; very good boy in spite of that, with gentle eyes like a girl's. By dint of patience, M. Hamel, our former master, succeeded in taming him, and when he had an errand in the neighborhood he

always sent Gaspard, who was only too happy to breathe the free air, and spatter himself in the brooks, and turn red in the sun. With M. Klotz that is all over.

Poor Gaspard, who already has had the greatest trouble with French, has never been able to learn a word of German. He balks for hours together over a single declension; and one feels in his frowning eyebrows more obstinacy and temper than attention. At every lesson the same scene over again: "Gaspard, get up." He gets up, sulkily, swings on his desk and sits down again without a word. Then the master beats him, and Mme. Klotz starves him. But it does not make him learn any faster. Often, at night, when we go to our little room, I say: "Don't cry, Gaspard; do as I do; learn to read German, because these people are stronger than we." But he always answers: "No, I will not. I want to go away. I want to get home." That was his fixed idea.

The *pining* of his first days came back upon him, only worse; and in the morning, at dawn, when I see him sitting on his bed, his eyes fixed, I know he is thinking of the windmill starting at that hour, and of the beautiful running water in which he had dabbled as a child. These things draw him, like a magnet, from afar; and the brutalities of the master only drive him into yearning for his home the more, and make him completely wild. Sometimes, when I see his blue eyes darken with rage after a beating with that cudgel, I say to myself that if I were M. Klotz I should be afraid

of that look. But that devil of a Klotz fears nothing. After blows, starvation; he has even invented a prison, and Gaspard seldom comes out of it. However, Sunday last, as he had not been out in the air for two months, he was taken with the rest of us to the fields beyond the village.

The weather was splendid, and we were running with all our might in the games, delighted to feel the cold north wind which gave promise of snow and sliding. As usual, Gaspard kept aloof, at the edge of the wood, rustling the leaves, cutting the branches, and making plays for himself all alone. When the time came to fall into rank and go home, no Gaspard! We searched for him and called him: No! he had run away. You should have seen Klotz's rage! His big face was purple; his tongue was too thick with German oaths to utter them. We were pleased enough. After sending the others to the village, he took two of the big boys, me and another, with him, and started for the Hénin mill. It was getting dark. Houses were closed everywhere, but warm with good fires and good Sunday meals, a little thread of light gliding out upon the road, and making me think how comfortable they must be at table and under shelter.

At the Hénins' the mill was stopped, the palisade closed, everybody within doors, both men and beasts. When the stable-boy opened the gate for us the horses and sheep stirred in their straw, and from the perches of the poultry-house came a flutter of wings and cries of fear, as if all those

little people had recognized Klotz. The people of the mill were supping in the kitchen, a big, warm kitchen, well-lighted, and everything shining, from the pendulum of the clock to the saucepans. Between the miller and his wife sat Gaspard, with the glowing face of a happy, petted child.

To explain his arrival he had invented some tale, I don't know what, of an archducal fête, a Prussian holiday, and they were celebrating his return to them gayly. When he saw M. Klotz, the poor boy looked about him for an open door by which to escape; but the strong hand of the master grasped his shoulder, and in a minute the uncle was informed of the runaway. Gaspard raised his head; no longer did he have his usual shamed look of a scholar in fault; and he who rarely spoke now found his tongue:

"Yes, I have run away. I will not stay at that school. I will not learn German — the language of thieves and murderers. I choose to speak French like my father and mother." He trembled; he was terrible.

"Hush, Gaspard . . ." said his uncle, but nothing could stop him.

"Let him go on . . . let him go on," sneered M. Klotz, "we 'll fetch him with gendarmes."

A big knife was lying on the table; Gaspard snatched it up with a terrible gesture that made the master step back.

"Bring on your gendarmes," he cried.

Then his Uncle Hénin, who began to be frightened, threw himself upon his nephew, wrenched

the knife away from him, and I saw a dreadful thing. While Gaspard was crying out: "I will not go! . . I will not go!" they bound him firmly. The poor boy bit and foamed, and called to his aunt, who, trembling and sobbing, had gone upstairs. . .

Then, while they harnessed the cart, the miller invited us to eat. As for me, I was not hungry, as you can think; but M. Klotz devoured the food while the miller made excuses for the insults Gaspard had offered to him and to the Emperor of Germany. That 's what it is to be afraid of gendarmes!

What a sad return! Gaspard lying in the straw at the bottom of the cart, like a sick sheep, said not a word. I thought him asleep, worn out by such anger and tears, and I feared he was very cold, being bareheaded, and without any cloak. But I dared not to say so for fear of the master.

It was raining now, a cold rain. M. Klotz, his fur cap well down upon his ears, kept flicking his horse and humming to himself. The wind made the light of the stars seem to jump as on we went, we went, along that white and icy road. We were far from the mill, no longer could we hear the sound of the sluice, when a feeble, tearful, suppliant voice rose from the depths of the vehicle, and it said, that voice, in our Alsace patois: "Losso mi fort gen, Herr Klotz." . . "Let me go, Monsieur Klotz." . . It was so sad to hear that the tears came into my eyes. M. Klotz, he smiled wickedly, and went on singing and whipping the horse.

In another minute the voice began again: "Losso mi fort gen, Herr Klotz. . ." and always in the same tone, low, soft, almost mechanical. Poor Gaspard! it was as if he were saying a prayer.

At last the cart stopped. We had reached the school. Mme. Klotz came out with a lantern, and was so angry with Gaspard Hénin that she wanted to beat him. But the Prussian stopped her, saying, with an evil laugh: "We will settle his account to-morrow. . . For to-night he has had enough."

Oh! yes, he had had enough, unhappy child! his teeth chattered, he trembled with fever. They were obliged to carry him to his bed. And I, too, I think I had a fever; for all night long I felt the jolting of the cart, and heard my poor friend saying, in his gentle voice: "Let me go, Monsieur Klotz!"

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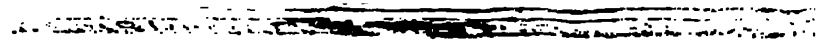

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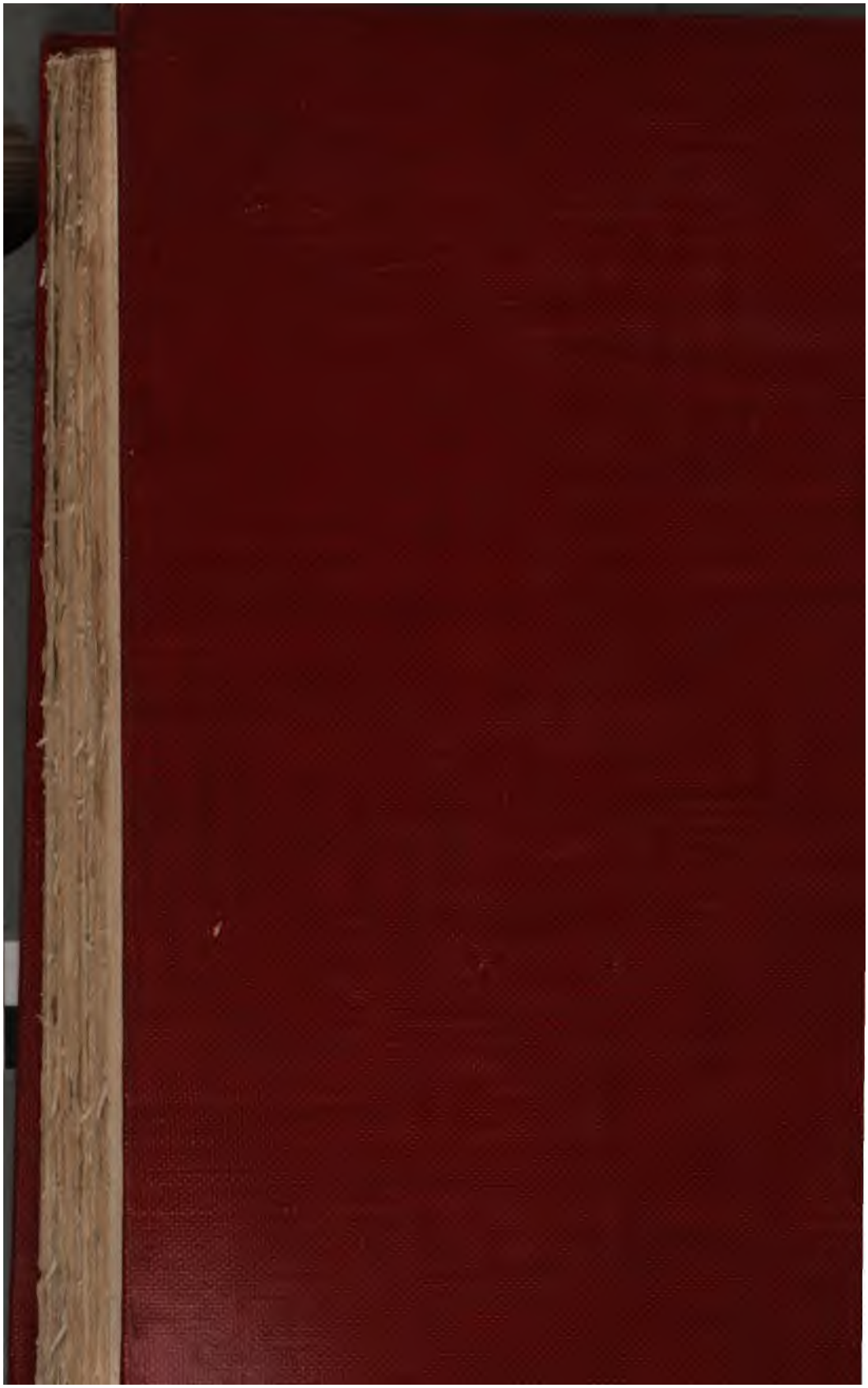
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